



Musée Holocauste Montréal
Montreal Holocaust Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recognizing the Roma Genocide

Montreal, July 20, 2017 – On August 2, the Montreal Holocaust Museum, in partnership with Romanipe, will host a commemoration of the Roma Genocide. The public is encouraged to attend and in this way, recognize and memorialize the organized murder of Roma and Sinti groups by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II.

The commemoration will take place at the Montreal Holocaust Museum on **Wednesday, August 2 at 7 pm**. Members of the Montreal Roma communities will read Roma Genocide survivor testimony and Paul Herczeg, a Holocaust survivor who witnessed the experiences of Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz-Birkenau will give his testimony.

August 2 has been designated by the international Roma and Sinti communities as the day to commemorate the Porrajmos, or genocide of the Roma during World War II. On this date in 1944, the last remaining 2,897 Roma and Sinti imprisoned in the so-called Zigeunerlager, or “Gypsy Camp” were murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The most recent estimate indicates that at least 500,000 Roma and Sinti were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II.

While formally recognized in countries such as Germany, Poland and Croatia, the Roma Genocide has yet to be officially acknowledged by the Canadian Government. Currently, there is an ongoing initiative led by Romanipe and supported by the Montreal Holocaust Museum to have the Roma Genocide recognized in Canada. “Government recognition of genocide is an essential first step in not only preventing mass atrocities and human rights violations, but discrimination and prejudice as well,” said Alice Herscovitch, Executive Director of the Montreal Holocaust Museum. The lack of official recognition of the genocide contributes to continued discrimination against Roma today.

Currently, there are anti-Roma incidents taking place across Europe, as well as prejudice against Roma refugees here in Canada. “The lack of indignation at the recent killings of Roma by far-right extremists speaks to the real dangers and consequences of forgetting the past,” says Dafina Savic, Founder of Romanipe. “Events like these signal the need to change perceptions and attitudes toward Roma and Sinti, in order to build a culture of understanding and acceptance rather than one of hate.”

About the Montreal Holocaust Museum: The Montreal Holocaust Museum educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the Holocaust, while sensitising the public to the universal perils of antisemitism, racism, hate and indifference. Through its Museum, its commemorative programs and educational initiatives, the Montreal Holocaust Museum promotes respect for diversity and the sanctity of human life.

About Romanipe: The Montreal-based, not-for-profit organization Romanipe fights discrimination against Roma by mobilizing around efforts to combat the prejudice faced by this community worldwide and in Canada.

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