

The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in Southeastern Europe

BETWEEN OBLIVION, ACKNOWLEDGMENT, AND DISTORTION

A STUDY BY

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities and the Roma Program at the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University

STUDY CONTRIBUTORS

FRANÇOIS-XAVIER BAGNOUD CENTER FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Margareta Matache

THE AUSCHWITZ INSTITUTE FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE AND MASS ATROCITIES

Gabriela Ghindea, Matei Demetrescu

COUNTRY-BASED RESEARCHERS (ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Bogdan Chiriac, Mirko Đuković, Ram Hadroj, Hikmet Karčić, Eleni Argiro Kouki, Vjollca Krasniqi, Hristo Kyuchukov, David Dragoljub Orlović, Milovan Pisarri, Deniz Selmani, Alenka Janko Spreizer

DESIGN

Serioja Bocsok

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Executive Summary

The history of Samudaripen/Porraimos remains a peripheral theme in Holocaust and genocide studies. Furthermore, to date, a limited number of publications have analyzed comparatively the history of Roma during the Second World War (WWII) in Southeastern Europe (SEE).

The regional study, *The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in Southeastern Europe: Between Oblivion, Acknowledgment, and Distortion*, provides synoptic knowledge that can be used to understand the place of SEE Roma in the Holocaust and WWII history, to examine practices of acknowledgment, memorialization, and commemoration, and to identify patterns of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion in eleven SEE countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia. We also hope that the study will contribute to cross-sectoral dialogues about the importance of addressing the often secluded history of Roma in SEE in connection with the lingering practice of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism in this region.

Aware of the complexities and limitations of regional studies, we used a mixed-methods approach that consisted of six main research elements: bibliographical research, archival research, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, narrative analysis, content analysis of selected online media and social media. The country-based experts adjusted the research methods and analysis to their expertise, research skills, and the realities and existing information at the national level.

This study provides a concise and comparative analysis of our current knowledge on a vast and complex topic, and is based in many aspects on foundational research in the field. Thus, we encourage replication and continuation of similar research, particularly focusing in-depth on any of the specific research themes mentioned in this report.

Key findings of the study

Terminology. Across times and geographies, States, people, civil society organizations, activists, scholars, and others have advanced different terms and concepts to name, describe, and analyze the Romani people, their culture, and realities during different periods, and the collective injustices Roma have faced, including during the Holocaust and WWII. The range of concepts, terms, and narratives, created within

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

groups and out-groups, prompted by different factors, actors, interests, histories, and contexts, have opposed, intersected, and influenced each other.

Our research covered eleven countries characterized by distinct and entangled Roma histories and political and geographical contexts, which often, however, present similarities. Thus, aware of specificities and intentional in not following a colonial habit of homogenizing experiences and realities, in this study, we avoided uniformizing terms to describe the Roma suffering during the Holocaust and WWII. Instead, we explored terminology and definitions preferred throughout the region to inform our choices, as well as our recommendations and critiques about concepts utilized in the public sphere.

G*psies: We used “Gypsies” or other exonyms only when we referred to Romani groups that identified themselves as such (e.g., UK Gypsies) or quoted people, literature, or historical documents. Moreover, when we had to use this exonym, considered offensive in other contexts, we wrote it as G*psy or g*psy, depending on the situation.

Roma: We do not use the term Roma as an umbrella term; instead we use it to recognize that the eleven country reports focused predominantly on the experiences of groups self-identified as Roma in SEE. When referring to the experiences of Sinti, Ashkali, or Egyptians in SEE, we utilize the preferred names chosen by those groups.

Anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism: Acknowledging the in-country official definitions, sensitivities, and preferences, but also general and individual conceptual understanding of racism, we use anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism to describe this specific form of racism when referring to SEE.

Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide: There is no consensus regarding the term that should be used to describe the mass atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime and their allies against the Roma and Sinti people in Europe. In fact, this is one of the most sensitive, normatively loaded, and controversial topics in political, institutional, and intergovernmental spaces.

At the political and epistemic levels, there are several ongoing controversies regarding the use of the Holocaust terminology in relation to the Roma and Sinti victims. Some advocate against the inclusion of the Roma and Sinti experiences in the Holocaust framework, arguing that the drivers and methods of persecution, numbers, ideologies, conditions, and experiences of the Roma and Sinti differed from those of the Jewish victims. Knowing that the Nazis labeled Roma and Sinti as “criminals” characterized by “asocial” behaviors, some voices maintain that, in contrast with the racialization of the Jewish people, it was the behaviors of some Roma and Sinti, not their construction as an inferior race, that constituted the main reason for annihilation. However, not everyone agrees. Scholars like Michael Steward emphasize that the so-called Roma social deviance “was imagined as a function of their biological (racial) heritage.”¹ And other activists and scholars stress that Roma cannot be stamped as worthless victims of the Holocaust and argue that neither asociability nor criminality were behavioral patterns or inborn characteristics of Roma or any other people.

In the present regional study, we opted for an inclusive approach; thus, we used Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide to describe the suffering of Roma victims from SEE during the Holocaust. We use Roma Holocaust as a shortened version when referring to Roma as victims of the Holocaust, not a separate historical process, and Roma Genocide as a shortened version of the specific genocide perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies, acknowledging that it was not the only genocide targeting Romani people in Europe.

Samudaripen/Porrajmos: The debates about these terms rooted in the Romani language have often been led by Roma and ally scholars from various disciplines. The choices involve terms like Samudaripe(n), Mudaripe(n), Phar(r)aj(i)mos, Por(r)ajmos, and Kalí Traš. In light of a variety of arguments, Romani dialects, sensitivities, differences, and power dynamics, in SEE, the Romani terms we use in this regional study to describe the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide are Samudaripen/Porrajmos.

We also acknowledge that all these terms are products or carriers of history or power, and thus, may change in time. We also hope that community members, leaders, policymakers, and scholars will engage in more inter-community and intra-community, inclusive discussions and decisions on terms, elements of sameness, connectedness, and collective consciousness.

History. Manifestations of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism have been documented throughout the history of Roma in Europe. Pre and during WWII, we can observe a focus and an intensification of “racial hygiene” pseudoscience, which also transitioned into the political and public discourse and policies. However, the eugenics movement and the racist narratives, which were used to justify the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, cannot be disconnected from the global theories on races and previous racist research, experiments, and measures against Roma.

Before and during WWII, Roma continued to be labeled and treated as intrinsically alien to the dominant populations. Local and national media contributed to, disseminated, or even initiated racist narratives about Roma, including by reporting incidents, which alluded to the idea of a cultural pattern of Roma “criminality.” In Albania and Greece, Roma were considered non-citizens, and laws prohibited them from becoming citizens. In Greece, Roma, especially itinerant Roma, were doubted as spies and collaborators with the enemy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Roma were divided into two different categories, namely black (*Čergaši*) and white G*psies (*Gurbeti*). Furthermore, across the region, authorities and the public discourse differentiated between itinerant and sedentary Roma and stamped Roma as “asocial,” criminals, and beggars. Such narratives justified and legitimized the racist laws, policies, and practices that countries put in place to target Roma people during WWII.

The extermination of the Roma people during the Holocaust in SEE did not involve gas chambers, although some of the victims, including Slovenian Roma and Sinti, were transported to such camps. In SEE, the methods of extermination varied from deportations, mass shootings, rape, starvation, or disease in Transnistria to concentration camps, execution sites, and victims thrown alive into furnaces at a brick factory in Jasenovac; forced labor, killings, and rape in Kosovo*; mass shootings and concentration camps as well as massacres carried out by collaborationists in Serbia. Furthermore, in some of the concentration camps in SEE, Roma were traumatized

by being forced to perform deeply disturbing tasks, including digging graves or undressing the dead.

In few SEE countries, the scholarship has not found evidence of Roma being deported to concentration camps or being victims of mass atrocities. But in Albania, our archival research points at manifestations of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism, including institutional racism, during WWII. Furthermore, in Bulgaria, our research identified oral history of sustained psychological harassment, attacks on Roma neighborhoods, the maintenance of constant fear of attacks, murderous violence, executions, economic restraint, and targeted persecution of Roma before and during WWII.

The number of Roma victims of the Holocaust in SEE remains unknown. As Paul Mojzes notes, there has been far less awareness about the Roma plight, one of the reasons being the extremely scarce number of Roma scholars dealing with this topic. Across SEE, the numbers vary grossly, from underestimations suggested by “minimizers” to exaggerations made by “maximizers.” At the same time, in various countries, including Bulgaria, archival documents were destroyed during or after the war, which has essentially contributed to obliterating the truth and the memory of many Roma. Mojzes uses the numbers estimated by Bogoljub Kočović and Vladimir Žerjavić, which in the Roma case was 27,000 (31.4%) across the former Yugoslavia, although this estimation does not distinguish between victims based on how they died.² In addition, we could count an estimated number of 11,000 Roma victims from Romania. And we do not have reliable data to estimate the number of victims and determine the exact categories of persecution and discriminatory measures in Albania, Bulgaria, or Greece.

Furthermore, during the Holocaust, we can observe one of the many long-established apparent paradoxes of anti-Roma racism. Roma fought as Partisans in countries like Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, and as citizens or residents of their countries. But at the same time, Roma were also victims of killings carried out by Partisans in Slovenia or Serbia.

Acknowledgment, Memorialization, and History Teaching. In SEE, institutions and communities have acknowledged and memorialized the victims of the Holocaust in various ways, from establishing memorial days and places of remembrance to national commissions studying the Holocaust, formal and nonformal education, art projects, and commemorative events. But the losses, pain, and resistance of the Roma victims and survivors of Samudaripen/Porrajmos and WWII have not yet been fully documented, embodied in the collective historical consciousness, and unveiled in history textbooks and sites of memory.

Acknowledgment: The normative or conventional acknowledgment of August 2 and other WWII-related dates with symbolic meaning in the Roma history has constituted one of the leading tools in a modest repertoire of symbolic *lieux de mémoire* aiming to install “the duty of remembrance” of the Roma victims of the Samudaripen/Porrajmos in SEE. States like Serbia have prioritized memorial days with significance at the national level, but frequently, August 2 has been recognized as a shared day of commemoration across the region, and broadly at the European and global levels.

Several countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania, Serbia - have adopted legislation or taken other formal steps to observe Samuradipen/Porraimos and mark August 2 or specific national remembrance days. Furthermore, State institutions in other SEE countries, such as Montenegro or North Macedonia, also started to observe August 2 as a commemorative day. However, they have not ensured normative acknowledgment; instead, the practice of acknowledgment has functioned as a protocolar decision of the government. Typically, Roma NGOs have led and organized the commemorative events, which occasionally included representatives of State institutions.

At the national level, we can sometimes observe a clash of memory between August 2, as a shared European memorial day of the Roma suffering during the Holocaust, and the acknowledgment of the history of the Roma during WWII within specific countries. There is a growing concern, especially within civil society, regarding the risk of forgetting or avoiding addressing or remembering the local atrocities perpetrated against Roma. Whereas Croatian Roma find it appropriate to also add a distinct memorial day for the Roma victims of Jasenovac and other camps in Croatia, countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro have yet to acknowledge at the normative level a memorial day marking the Roma suffering or resistance during WWII within those countries.

Memorials: In the past few decades, several sites of memory - monuments, plaques, graves, building names - dedicated to or inclusive of the Roma victims of the Holocaust or Roma heroes of WWII have been erected in capital cities or/and historically meaningful areas, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia. Moreover, in other countries, there have been erected sites of commemoration and remembrance of Roma Partisans and heroes of Resistance movements. For example, in Greece, there are some monuments that honor or are related to the participation of Roma in the Resistance. In 1985, such a monument was erected in Tavros, a working-class neighborhood between Athens and Piraeus.

Commemorative ceremonies: Progress has been observable in several SEE countries regarding the awareness about the Samuradipen/Porraimos. Across the region, Roma civil society organizations and scholars have been key leaders in writing and revitalizing Roma history during WWII, advocating to create the above discussed permanent sites of memory and organizing commemorative events. Moreover, recently, ceremonies that involve local Roma and non-Roma communities and local authorities have also been noticeable in countries like Romania or Serbia.

The commemoration of August 2, as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, or other historically meaningful dates are recent developments in some SEE countries. And most often, Roma organizations, which often struggle with limited financial and organizational capacity, lead the efforts. Many of the specific remembrance events for the Roma victims have not received the same attention from high-level politicians as other Holocaust commemorative events. Yet, although State institutions rarely lead commemorative events for the Roma victims of the Holocaust or WWII, a trend of State representatives (even though not very often high-level) participating in or co-sponsoring such events is visible. Hence, there is a crucial need to ensure awareness and truth-telling about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and the Roma history during WWII in SEE in a more formalized, substantive, and sustainable manner.

History teaching: The official historical and memorial narratives endorsed by the SEE States in schools omit or address the place and the role of Roma in the national histories insufficiently. Nevertheless, there are also countries where we noticed promising progress. For example, in Croatia, information about Samudaripen/Porrajmos has slowly entered the educational sphere, with significant progress being made in the last decade. Roma are included in the history curricula within the WWII/National Socialism theme. However, such efforts have remained rather isolated and often led by civil society organizations in countries like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo*, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Furthermore, in countries like North Macedonia, the Roma and Sinti suffering during the Holocaust has generally been briefly mentioned only as an “other victims” category in history textbooks and Holocaust research. Moreover, in countries where Roma did not experience genocide during WWII, like Albania, the school textbooks list Roma only as one of the targets of the Nazi regime but do not include information related to the history of the Roma during WWII in the specific country.

Generally, in the region, more substantive work is needed toward the inclusion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in the school curricula and textbooks. Moving forward, we need to revise textbooks critically and make the historical facts that involved Roma an integral part of history textbooks and teaching. As stressed by the United Nations (UN) and Pierre Nora, “the writing and teaching of history should help to uncover the selective and self-serving nature of memory. In recounting the relationship with the past, it should highlight prejudice and stereotypes embedded in collective memory.”³

Denial and Distortion. To date, there are no texts issued by national or intergovernmental bodies that specifically recognize, define, or sanction the denial and distortion of Samudaripen/Porrajmos. Stakeholders have ignored or sidelined the legal, policy, and applied relevance of defining and addressing denial and distortion, a gap that has enabled manifestations of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism. Nevertheless, the 2020 IHRA working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination mentions practices of “distorting or denying persecution of Roma or the genocide of the Roma” and “glorifying the genocide of the Roma.”⁴

In this regional study, we identified several categories of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion, which are based primarily on the Roma realities and their experiences of Porrajmos/Samudaripen distortion and denial in the eleven countries covered by the research: hardcore and softcore denial; historical silence and obliteration of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide; minimization of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide; misrepresentation of the racialization of Roma during the Holocaust and dismissing its function in the genocide; hierarchies of victims and genocides; glorification, whitewashing, and honoring of perpetrators, acts, and symbols of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide; endorsement of the vocabulary, extermination mechanisms, and symbols of the Holocaust to threaten or terrify Roma; demeaning the memory of the Samudaripen/Porrajmos, its victims and survivors; mockery of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide; deflection of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide to evade or deny national responsibility or complicity.

However, knowing that these categories have been identified based exclusively on the experiences of Roma in SEE, additional country and region-specific types of distortion and denial should constitute the subject of future research and policymaking.

Steps forward. This regional study includes a list of recommendations aiming to generate constructive debates in different fora about the current level of awareness around the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in the SEE public sphere. In the Executive Summary, we listed only a few concise recommendations for States. Please consult the Steps Forward section of this study for a comprehensive list of recommendations.

- It's crucial to initiate/continue and support, through governmental and intergovernmental initiatives and appropriate funding, multi-year research programs focusing on the Roma victims of the Holocaust. Moreover, it is particularly pressing to document and collect information about gender-based violence and the local concentration camps and prisons during WWII, which, to date, have been disregarded in research and memorialization processes.
- It is important that all States ensure normative acknowledgment of August 2, the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, fund, and participate in commemoration events. It is also recommendable for States to work in partnership with Roma survivors, leaders, and organizations to establish memorial days marking the genocide implemented within specific countries as well as the suffering or resistance during WWII within those countries.
- The memorialization of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide should become a priority for State institutions. In particular, States and the EU should erect dedicated sites of memory for the Roma victims of the Holocaust; establish Roma history museums and include sections on the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in European, national, and local history museums; name streets, buildings, schools after Roma victims and heroes; and host permanent exhibitions dedicated to relevant periods in Roma history.
- The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide needs to be mainstreamed into processes of Holocaust acknowledgment, memorialization, and history teaching.

There is a crucial need for conceptual, legal, and policy documents defining and addressing the denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide at the national and intergovernmental levels, including by the IHRA and the UN.

We hope the recommendations included in this study will support State processes of acknowledgment, memorialization, commemoration, and history teaching and measures to prevent denial and distortion. It is our responsibility – community representatives/leaders, academics, activists, policymakers, diplomats - not to lose sight of the actual people and work together towards ensuring legal protections against denial and distortion, anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism, and other racisms and dangerous *-isms*.

PART 1 Introduction

In the past fifteen years, Europe has faced several major emergencies, including a climate crisis, an economic and financial crisis, a pandemic, and a war. All these overlapping phenomena have impacted the continent in dramatic ways leading to escalations of structural inequities, blunt racist acts, discourses, and narratives targeting Roma people.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, politicians, journalists, and other opinion makers have spread racist rhetoric, labeling Roma as sources of COVID-19 transmission. Police violence during the pandemic has been justified through similar narratives. Local or central State authorities have authorized discriminatory, policed, and militarized measures, primarily in poor Romani neighborhoods or towns.⁵ And violence perpetrated by citizens against their Roma co-citizens has been on a spike, too.

During the ongoing war in Ukraine, Roma refugees have been met with discrimination and violence both in Ukraine and the neighboring countries. Ukrainian Roma refugees have been often placed in segregated reception centers. In several instances, journalists have shed light on cases of police abuse against Romani women who fled the war-torn country. Other Roma families were denied exit from Ukraine by the authorities.⁶

As we are currently witnessing the atrocities in Ukraine and the pandemic across Europe, we can see through and recognize clearly similar processes, tools, and mechanisms of scapegoating Roma and their place in the enduring history of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism. The region has witnessed a resurgence of anti-Roma sentiment, fueled by practices of scapegoating that illustrate a dangerous continuation of the processes of anti-Roma discrimination that led to the Roma genocide during the Holocaust.

Thus, anti-Roma discrimination practices and violent episodes targeting Roma people are likely to increase, particularly in the context of the refugee crisis caused by the currently unfolding war in Ukraine. On a general background of raising xenophobic, antisemitic, and racist attitudes worldwide, Roma are prone to be again among the most vulnerable and targeted groups, due to the often insufficient or interrupted efforts that addressed a long history of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism and dehumanization mechanisms.

The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, its root causes, and the processes that led to it have constituted a limited priority for academia, States, and civil society in several SEE countries. These phenomena have been under-researched, and often, inade-

quately acknowledged and debated in the public sphere of SEE countries. A large part of the Roma history, memory, and testimonies has vanished unnoticed, and only by a minority of actors decried.

This lack of knowledge and synopses in the dialogue between State institutions, civil society organizations, and academia have led often to impediments in effectively challenging distorted narratives of the past. Moreover, stereotypes and prejudices regarding Roma have been used to reinforce and legitimize exclusionary practices and discriminatory patterns of behavior in the public sphere. Fueled by the sensationalist and ethnicized approach of the media, hate speech still flourishes based on recycled narratives that distort historical facts regarding the Holocaust, glorify perpetrators and eugenics measures, and revolve around the racist label of the “criminal lifestyle” of Roma. These unaddressed narratives, as well as inconsistent State policies, have provided populist thought leaders and extremists a platform to galvanize latent racism in socially fragmented populations. Such situations are ripe to escalate into violence, especially in times marked by an overlap of crises.

Intergovernmental organizations, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Commission (EC), and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) have stressed over the last few years the importance of strengthening the institutional obligations of governments to incorporate and deliver specific Roma inclusion goals in mainstream policy developments. However, many government officials and public servants lack the knowledge and skills necessary to develop policies that combat racism and distortions of the complex history of the Roma in this region. In several cases, one can notice a failure in implementing existing legal frameworks and recommendations related to antidiscrimination and the protection of national minorities.

The present study builds upon the knowledge and expertise gained by the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) in two previous Roma-centered programs implemented in SEE. In October 2019, AIPG, with the support of IHRA, organized a regional seminar and consultations with government officials, as well as representatives from the civil society and academia under the motto: *Countering Distortion through Governmental Action: Building the Capacity of Government Actors for Promoting and Protecting the Civil and Human Rights of Roma in Southeastern Europe*. One of the main conclusions of this program and follow-up discussions in the region was the crucial need to develop more research initiatives regarding Roma history and find efficient methods of translating this knowledge into customized training formats and instruments.⁷

The study also builds on the research with Roma people developed by the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights (FXB Center) at Harvard University since 2012. In the past decade, the Roma Program at Harvard has established itself as a robust source of research on neglected Roma related topics in the academic field, generating studies, articles, research projects, and conference presentations.

Consequently, in July 2021, the Auschwitz Institute, in partnership with the FXB Center and with the support of IHRA, CoE, and the RCC, initiated a follow-up regional research project entitled *Countering Distortion of the Genocide of the Roma in*

Southeastern Europe - A Key Element for Developing Anti-Racism Strategies and Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices, aimed to investigate the level of knowledge regarding the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and possible distortion patterns in the region. The present study is the outcome of this one-year research project.

Upholding the truth that all forms of Holocaust distortion must be constantly challenged, and strategies for countering them must be developed, in order to fulfill our moral responsibility of *Never Again*, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding and raised awareness of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in the European public sphere. Teaching accurately and efficiently about the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime and its allies, as well as other atrocities committed against Roma in Europe will be an effective tool in combating all forms of racism, hatred, discrimination, and prejudice, as well as radicalization, Holocaust denial and distortion.

We hope this study will inspire the development of more customized and user-friendly training instruments informed by the realities in the target countries that will be piloted and enhanced through sustained dialogue between different stakeholders. The general recognition of the Samudaripen/Porraimos and the observance of a dedicated European memorial day (August 2), complemented by other relevant commemorations at the national level, will also constitute an important symbolic step in the fight against racism and identity-based violence against Roma people. Moreover, we hope that this project will provide serious input for setting up and promoting in the public space useful repositories of relevant resources related to the Roma history in the target countries. This will also encourage the development of creative and interactive approaches to commemorative events, designed to address broader categories of the public.

The beneficiaries of these study are first and foremost stakeholders involved in designing, informing, and implementing anti-discrimination and anti-racist strategies in SEE: policymakers, government officials, civil servants active in central and local administrations, media representatives, law enforcement representatives (judges, prosecutors, police forces), actors involved in planning and implementing memory initiatives and policies. For all of them, this study aims to provide a concise synthesis of important trends in the region. Furthermore, this report emphasizes the crucial need for cross-sectoral and transnational cooperation when drafting inclusive and timely Roma related laws, policies, and strategies, particularly laws and programs to prevent and combat Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion.

The recent atrocities in Europe that will affect all societies with an unforeseen impact highlight the utmost importance of having as many stakeholders as possible introduced to the concepts of genocide and other atrocity crimes, and the processes by which these crimes occur; to enhance societies' knowledge and skills in recognizing, preventing and ending identity-based discrimination; to empower all relevant stakeholders with the practical competencies (foundational knowledge and skills) necessary to counter distortion and protect the civil rights and human rights of Roma; to identify spaces of cooperation between government actors and civil society in ending identity-based discrimination against Roma, through actions taken at national and regional levels; to foster a vivid exchange of best practices in different expert networks.

Roma individuals and communities have been deeply affected by the shroud of silence around a traumatic event in their history that continues to have a significant impact on the survivor generations. While we cannot change a traumatic past, we can be responsible witnesses who validate the experience of the survivors and their communities and thereby support the healing capacity we all hold within as a society. To move together toward a more just future, it is crucial to understand the intertwined risk factors that lead to mass atrocities and ceaselessly teach the lessons learned from those destructive processes in carefully designed programs.

Benefitting from the ability to leverage more than a decade of institutional expertise has allowed AIPG to operationalize the identification of critical risk factors for mass atrocities, as well as relevant policy response options to provide State representatives and other key stakeholders with concrete frameworks to address warning signs before an outbreak of violence occurs. This study represents one possible step of many more necessary to addressing Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion and all other crucial topics discussed in this research paper.

Overview of the Research Methods and Terminology

2.1. Methodology

Roma and Sinti people have been largely overlooked in WWII memory, repair, and historiography. Roma and Sinti were not asked to testify in the Nuremberg Trials, were not mentioned in Adenauer's celebrated 1951 apology or other symbolic acts of contrition, and were neglected by many compensation programs. Correspondingly, only decades after the Holocaust, have scholars begun to document their plight during the Holocaust in Europe. Thus, for the Roma and Sinti, significant parts of their history, pain, resistance, memory, and testimonies have gone unnoticed and have not been memorialized.

To date, the history of Samudaripen/Porrajmos has remained a peripheral theme in studies of the Holocaust and genocide. And in SEE, a limited number of publications have analyzed comparatively the history of the Roma across countries during WWII. As About and Abakunova argued in 2016, "neighboring territories in the Balkans have rarely been compared."⁸

This regional study provides synoptic knowledge that can be used to understand the place of SEE Roma in the Holocaust and WWII history, to examine practices of acknowledgment, memorialization, and commemoration, and to identify patterns of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion.

We reviewed existing historiography and identified and explored new archival records about the genocide, persecution, discrimination of the Roma people, and other racialized policies and practices that targeted them during WWII in eleven countries in SEE, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia. The historical overview informed, enriched, and particularized our analysis of present-day mechanisms of denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide.

The study entailed two primary phases. Using a mutually agreed-upon methodology, an international multidisciplinary team formed of eleven scholars contributed country-based reports analyzing relevant existing and novel sources. The country reports went through several rounds of feedback from the research team, receiving also support from other country-based researchers. Subsequently, the academic coordinator analyzed the national reports comparatively and identified patterns, similarities, specificities, and differences regarding the Roma WWII history, processes of acknowledgment, memorialization, and history teaching, as well as mechanisms of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion in SEE. The team, primarily the country-based researchers, fact-checked and revised the final study.

Aware of the complexities and limitations of regional studies, we used a mixed-methods approach that consisted of six main research elements, which the national experts adjusted based on their specific national and historical context, needs, individual expertise, and fields of study.

Bibliographical research. All the country-based scholars critically reviewed existing literature and historiography in their respective national languages, English, or other languages. We analyzed historical events and how the history of Samudaripen/Porrajmos, persecution, and racism before and during WWII have been distorted. We also reviewed the literature regarding the distortion and denial of the Holocaust. The study team used a diverse pool of academic work, particularly books, journal articles, and studies, as well as reports published by academics, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations.

The historiographical analysis of secondary sources was not uniform, given that historiographical production was disparate across countries; this caused omissions of some historical truths in the regional study. For example, we found plenty of sources in countries like Romania and Croatia. However, in other countries, such as Bulgaria and North Macedonia, the history of Roma during WWII has been poorly addressed by academia; hence, in such cases, the researchers had to rely mostly on oral history: testimonies from Roma survivors collected by activists and academics.

A scarcity of research, sources, oral history, and historiographical production has presented a challenge in writing some of the national reports. In contemporary scholarship in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the researcher could find only a few academic materials and a Ph.D. thesis about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide;⁹ nevertheless, researchers were able to identify new archival fonds. Similarly, almost no testimonies, research, or publications exist on the history of the Roma people during WWII in Bulgaria; thus, the researcher relied on oral history, or “narrative knowing,”¹⁰ as a primary qualitative method, collecting stories from Roma and from their descendants and witnesses who were subjected to violence, attacks, or attempted deportation to labor concentration camps during WWII. Such testimonies constituted valuable sources about the lived experiences and the meanings the survivors of injustice gave to their pain.¹¹ Thus, it is imperative that more historical research, including oral history, be produced, primarily in countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Kosovo*, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

Archival research. The study contributors analyzed existing archival records (including oral archives) of individuals and families, policies and laws, newspapers, etc., that contained information about the plight of the Roma during the Holocaust and WWII in the targeted countries. In countries like Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the researchers also identified and analyzed new, previously unknown, archival fonds about Roma in pre-war times. In Albania, the researcher identified 80 documents, including 65 letters of correspondence, that describe the treatment of the Roma people from as early as 1920 up to 1950 in the State Archives of Albania. And in several archives in Bosnia and Herzegovina (e.g., the Archives of the Islamic Community, Sarajevo Historical Archive, and the Historical Museum), the researcher also identified archival material about attempts to save Muslim Roma during the Holocaust. Based on the archival research, some of the study contributors created annotated lists of national archival resources (archival fonds or single documents), which we

compiled to inspire and support future research. Please consult the *Appendix* of this study with the annotated lists of archival resources.

We encountered challenges in conducting archival research and identifying archival fonds. In countries like Montenegro, the restrictions and regulations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic limited access to archives. In Bulgaria, the researcher encountered a striking situation: the archive's computer system would list a document as existing, but the actual document was missing. Unfortunately, as the archivists explained, during the communist period in Bulgaria, archivists destroyed Roma-related documents that they considered insignificant. Also, in countries like Slovenia, the archive fonds of WWII are not described fully. In addition, across the region, many archive fonds and documents have not been digitized.

In fact, due to the lack of comprehensive or new archive sources, many existing authors and studies have repeated the descriptions, quoting the same sources or publishing the same documents in SEE. Therefore, the historiography remains fragmented and needs to be revised and expanded.

Semi-structured interviews. The interviews constituted a critical primary source for our research findings. All eleven researchers used interviews to gather information and anecdotes about one or more study topics. In each country, we interviewed various stakeholders, including representatives of state institutions dealing with memory and remembrance, anti-discrimination, Holocaust teaching, and Roma inclusion; descendants of Holocaust or WWII persecution victims; non-Roma who witnessed events of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide; academics; representatives of civil society organizations; artists and educators. The regional report draws ideas, stories, and conclusions from over 100 formal interviews and informal conversations.

Document analysis. The research team reviewed and analyzed relevant documents - policy and legal documents, case law, governmental reports, and textbooks - available in the national language to answer one or more study questions, especially regarding normative acknowledgment, history teaching, and denial and distortion.

Narrative analysis. Some members of the research team analyzed written and spoken intellectual narratives from scholars, politicians, journalists, and opinion-makers. Our goal was to identify clusters of anti/pro/neutral beliefs and narratives crafted or reinforced about Roma in the 1930s-40s and/or 2019-2021. The researchers analyzed narratives included in newspapers, magazines, interviews, videos, TV materials, and secondary sources. For instance, in Slovenia, the researcher reviewed articles published between 1938 and 1939 and between 2019 and 2021.

Based on such analysis, the regional report provides information that can be used to identify functions and meanings of words and ideas that carry ideological weight or a particular narrative about Roma; observe commonalities and patterns across countries; detect populist and/or racist opinions; and probe nexuses between racist language/hate speech and anti-Roma actions. However, not all researchers were able to conduct such an analysis. Therefore, to avoid generalizations in the study, we made references to specific countries when we used narrative analysis.

Content analysis of selected online media and social media. The researchers used key search terms (common anti-Roma expressions), as well as combinations of terms (e.g., gypsy criminality – Holocaust; Roma- Hitler; COVID-19 – Roma people, etc.) to identify comments (on forums and comment sections on social media) on the news posted by local and national media outlets and State institutions on their social media and websites. The researchers analyzed comments made on posts/articles, including some that received high levels of attention from users. The team particularly looked at explicit and implicit rhetoric of violence, fake information, scapegoating, denial or distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, and racist symbols. The search focused explicitly but not exclusively on selected peak news and events that appeared before and during the COVID-19 pandemic from and around recent historical Roma anniversaries. Some team members also relied on existing or ongoing studies on hate speech, such as an upcoming European Roma Rights Centre report in Albania or the *Pecao* project, implemented in North Macedonia by Romalítico, RRoma, and ERGO Network. To avoid generalizations, we made references to specific countries when using social media analysis. At the same time, given the scope of the project, we relied on qualitative methods and manual coding, which narrowed our opportunity to engage in a more systematic analysis of some topics, including measuring consistently Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion online.

In this research project, we connected theoretical frameworks, historiographical analysis, and data collection strategies analyses from various disciplines, including history, sociology, ethnography, and political science, to identify and unpack elements of the Roma history during the Holocaust and WWII, along with processes of acknowledgment and memorialization, and denial and distortion. We often encountered an insufficient pool of scholarship and were faced with existing patterns of obliterating and silencing Roma history. For example, the currently existing data and the interviews we conducted did not help us answer particular research questions, including questions related to gender violence and the plight of the LGBT Roma during the Holocaust.

This study is based on a comparative approach that provided us with a valuable framework to identify and analyze similarities, differences, rival explanations, and conclusions about the definitions, theories, legal and policy frameworks, and practices regarding the history of Roma people during the Holocaust and WWII; acknowledgment, memorialization, commemoration, and history teaching; and present-day denial and distortion. The comparative approach allowed us to form classifications and typologies; it helped capture more data in proposing categories and more nuanced problem solutions and recommendations. To lower the risk of research bias and enhance the credibility of the data and findings, we triangulated methods and sources of evidence. Still, given the scope of the research project, the study provides only an overview of the complex topics announced above. Thus, we encourage replication and continuation of similar research, particularly focusing in-depth on any of the specific research themes.

Our research team was multinational, multi-ethnic, and multidisciplinary. It included eleven researchers from the countries comprised in the project, a Harvard academic coordinator, and two genocide prevention experts from the Auschwitz Institute. The country-based experts adjusted the research methods and analysis to their expertise,

research skills, and the realities and existing information at the national level. This study provides an analysis of our current knowledge on a complex topic and is based on foundational research in the field. Identifying additional categories of Roma history distortion, archives, and oral history should constitute a priority of future studies.

2.2. Terminology and Working Definitions

Across times and geographies, States, people, civil society organizations, activists, scholars, and other interested parties have advanced different terms and concepts to name, describe, and analyze the Romani people, their culture, and realities during different periods, and the collective injustices Roma have faced, including during the Holocaust and WWII. The range of concepts, terms, and narratives, created within groups and out-groups, prompted by different factors, actors, interests, histories, and contexts have opposed, intersected, and influenced each other.

Within-group, the fluidity, transformation, and diversity of the Romani culture and people, partly informed by a diasporic experience, echo how and why concepts relevant to Romani culture and identities have emerged and keep changing. Moreover, within-group, the history of various Romani groups and experiences, the lack of power resources, influences from dominant narratives, and individual perspectives have also led to different or opposing concepts and definitions.

Out-groups holding differential power have also impacted the processes of naming or narrating Romani people, realities, and history, including Samudaripen/Porraimos. In different fields of study, scholars have often examined Romani people and labeled their experiences from a position of dominance, without employing critical reflexivity and by using or accepting whiteness/gadjo-ness as the prevailing norm or standard. Political leaders and regimes, ideologies, different interests, schools of thought, and anti-Romani myths have also played a role in the naming and analysis processes.

Throughout history, Romani people and voices have been kept at the margins of power resources (e.g., media, politics, wealth, land, cultural spaces), lacking active power and power ability.¹² And thus, in investigating the diversity of terms, definitions, and narratives that various stakeholders use within their Roma-related work, we critically explored and unpacked terms, definitions, and narratives as conceptual tools and instruments of epistemic, cultural, and political power; products of history and carriers of history; products of history and consequences of power; products of oppression and products of resistance.

To understand the terminology used in this study, it is important to emphasize that our research covered eleven countries characterized by distinct and tangled Roma histories and political and geographical contexts, which often, however, present similarities. Thus, aware of specificities and intentional in not following a colonial habit of homogenizing people, experiences, and realities, in this study, we did not

attempt to make the terms uniform, especially the terms used at the national level to describe the Roma suffering during the Holocaust and WWII. Instead, the country reports explored terminology and definitions; this informed our choices, and our recommendations and critiques about some terms and definitions utilized in the public sphere.

G/gypsies. In the past few decades, at the European level, intergovernmental organizations and official documents have rarely used the term Gypsy (hereinafter G*psy or g*psy), unless referring to the Gypsy population in the UK. Outside the UK, visible Romani leaders, activists, and scholars have categorized the term G/g*psy as a racial slur, a derogatory exonym imposed by non-Roma on Romani people, a product of oppression that carries historical weight.

For this study, which focuses mainly on SEE, none of the country reports used that exonym or its equivalents in the national languages (e.g., cigani, ciganski, țigan, cigan, ciganin, tsigganoi). Moreover, some of the experts highlighted the long struggle to replace the offensive terms. For example, in Montenegro, the term ciganin (hereinafter c*ganin) was considered offensive even in the 19th century.¹³ In Romania, Roma leaders requested as early as 1919 to have the term țigan (hereinafter ț*gan) replaced with Roma as they considered ț*gan both offensive and inaccurate.¹⁴ And in Albania, in 1946, Roma leaders sent requests to the Prime Minister's Office in Tirana and other public officials asking them to stop using derogatory terms to describe Roma in events and official meetings.¹⁵

The country-based reports used the offensive exonyms only when the authors referred to Romani groups that identified themselves as such or quoted people, literature, or historical documents. We followed the same approach in the regional study. Moreover, when we had to use the exonym in other contexts, we wrote it as G*psy or g*psy, depending on the background.

Roma. After decades of advocacy efforts, Romani and ally activists and scholars convinced international and national institutions to replace the term G*psy with Roma in official documents. For example, the European Parliament uses Roma as the general term that “covers groups such as Roma, Travellers, Sinti/Manouches, Kalés/Gitans, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkalis/Égyptiens, Yéniches, Doms and Loms.”¹⁶ IHRA also uses Roma “as an umbrella term which includes different related groups, whether sedentary or not, such as Roma, Travellers, Gens du voyage, Resandefolket/De resande, Sinti, Camminanti, Manouches, Kalés, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkalis, Égyptiens, Yéniches, Doms, Loms and Abdal that may be diverse in culture and lifestyles.”¹⁷ Thus, in this context, the term Roma can be seen not only as an offspring of the Romani language but also a product of history and Romani resistance.

For this study, all the country-based scholars used the term Roma to refer to Roma groups in SEE. Some stated that Roma was an ethnonym with which most Roma identify in their countries. Others point to the fact that Roma activists and researchers prefer the term Roma. We also encountered some specificities. For instance, Greek Roma prefer to put the indication Greek before the term Roma to emphasize that they also belong to the Greek nation.

Nevertheless, some activists and scholars interviewed for the purpose of this study have also critically discussed the term Roma. For example, the Sinti from Slovenia we interviewed indicated that the Sinti people did not feel the term Roma was inclusive of their experiences. In fact, Diriccharidi Reichard argued that we have witnessed a process of Romanization of groups. Consequently, Diriccharidi Reichard often uses the term Cigani/[G*psies] instead of Roma.¹⁸ Rudi Seger-Janez, another Sinto interviewed, confirmed that the word Roma is unacceptable to the Sinto community. "It would be better if the name Gypsies remained in use instead of Roma," he maintained.¹⁹ Also, in Croatia, issues related to both terminology and native language still create challenges to preserving the Bajaši and Ashkali identities. And similar challenges were noted in Kosovo* in relation to the Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Thus, in this context, the term Roma can also be discussed as a tool of epistemic and political power or homogenization.

Since the First World Roma Congress held in 1971, when Roma leaders agreed on the term Roma, leaders of various Romani and Romani-related groups have not jointly discussed this umbrella term, nor the related elements of same-ness, connected-ness, and collective consciousness. But various voices with access to spaces of power have advanced several alternatives, including Romani people or people of Romani background, as more inclusive terms. But none of these terms have yet been discussed in inclusive, intra-community and inter-community debates, or received consensus.

In this study, we do not use the term Roma as an umbrella term, but we use it to recognize that our country reports focused predominantly on the experiences of groups self-identified as Roma in SEE. When referring to the experiences of Sinti, Ashkali, or Egyptians in SEE, we utilize the preferred names chosen by those groups.

We also acknowledge that all these terms are products or carriers of history, and thus, may change in time. We also hope that community members, leaders, organizers, and scholars will engage in more open and inclusive discussions and decisions on terms, elements of sameness, connectedness, and collective consciousness.

Anti-Roma racism. Anti-G(g)ypsyism. Anti-Roma discrimination. Romaphobia. Scholars and activists have operated with various terms to describe past and present racialized oppression, collective injustices, and structural inequities faced by the Romani people. Some of these terms are anti-Roma/Romani racism, anti-Roma and anti-Traveller racism, Romaphobia, anti-G(g)ypsyism, or anti-Roma discrimination.

Generally, intergovernmental organizations have opted for the terms anti-Gypsyism or antigypsyism. For instance, in 2011, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) introduced the term anti-Gypsyism in its Recommendation no. 13 to describe a "specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination (...)"²⁰ In 2012, the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner defined the term differently, as "the specific expression of biases, prejudices and stereotypes that motivate the everyday behaviour of many members of majority groups towards the members of Roma and

Traveller communities.”²¹ In 2020, IHRA defined antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination as “a manifestation of individual expressions and acts as well as institutional policies and practices of marginalization, exclusion, physical violence, devaluation of Roma cultures and lifestyles, and hate speech directed at Roma as well as other individuals and groups perceived, stigmatized, or persecuted during the Nazi era, and still today, as ‘Gypsies.’ This leads to the treatment of Roma as an alleged alien group and associates them with a series of derogatory stereotypes and distorted images that represent a specific form of racism.” IHRA also emphasized that “[t]he use of the national equivalent of the term is recommended, Canada and the United States use the term anti-Roma racism.”²² The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), a governmental regional cooperation framework in Southeastern Europe, also operates with the term anti-Gypsyism, although using a hyphen and capital G.²³ The website of the RCC Roma Integration Project includes several documents that define anti-Gypsyism, including a definition from the Alliance against Antigypsyism, which defines the term as “the specific racism towards Roma, Sinti, Travellers and others who are considered ‘gypsies’ in the public imagination.”²⁴

Scholars and activists have also debated the terminology and working definitions regarding the form of racism that Romani people experience. For instance, the Alliance against Antigypsyism has opted for the language of antigypsyism, which they defined as “a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma ‘gypsy’ or other related terms.”²⁵ Oprea and Matache critiqued this approach, arguing that “by taking a more behavioral approach, the Alliance points narrowly at ‘ordinary’ discrimination. Based on this framework, ‘antigypsyism’ does not target a particular identity based on certain identity markers; instead, unlike other forms of racism, its core marker is society’s perceptions. By doing so, they disregard the history of anti-Romani collective injustices, structural racism, and hierarchical ideology, and consequently, whiteness/gadjoness–power and privileges that non-Roma have over Roma.”²⁶ Thus, some alternative terms include anti-Roma racism, anti-Roma and Sinti racism, or anti-Romani racism, which Matache defines as “as a perpetual, complex, and often invisible machinery of hegemony and control embedded in the organization of power across Europe.”²⁷ These debates could be grasped through the lenses of epistemic and geographic differences.

In the country reports, the researchers used various terms to describe the collective injustices that Roma have faced: antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination, racism against Roma, discrimination, anti-Roma racism, or anti-G(g)yypsyism. Some researchers used either anti-Roma racism or anti-G(g)yypsyism or both terms interchangeably. The country reports also illustrated States’ ongoing discussions and decision-making processes on these terms and their meanings.²⁸ In 2021, Romania adopted a law regarding measures to prevent and combat antiziganism.²⁹ However, many Romanian Roma activists have long rejected the term and were not consulted in the process of drafting that law. In Croatia, in response to the 5th Opinion by the Advisory Committee for the Protection of National Minorities, regarding the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Croatia, in July 2021, the Government of Croatia stated that “[c]onsidering the fact that the ‘Roma strategy does not include concrete measures targeted at antigypsyism as a specific form of racism’ and being aware that anti-Roma racism is an ambiguous phenomenon with a wide social and political acceptance, we would

like to emphasize that the Republic of Croatia, as an active member of IHRA (...) has supported the adoption of a working definition of anti-Roma racism."³⁰

Thus, in the present regional study, acknowledging the in-country official definitions, sensitivities, and preferences, but also general and individual conceptual understanding of racism, we use anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism to describe this form of racism when referring to SEE.

Roma Genocide or Roma Holocaust. There is no consensus regarding the term that should be used to describe the mass atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime and their allies against the Romani people in Europe. In fact, this is one of the most sensitive, normatively loaded, and controversial topics in political, institutional, and intergovernmental spaces. And often, the choices over one term or another are made in the realm of political, epistemic, and cultural differences and power.

At the international level, intergovernmental bodies have not found yet a consensus on the use of the terms Roma Holocaust or/and Roma genocide. In 2015, the European Parliament declared and embraced August 2 as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.³¹ In 2020, the Council of Europe emphasized that the organization uses the term Roma Holocaust "in line with the current practice at the Council of Europe."³² The OSCE and IHRA have generally used the term Roma genocide.

Similar differences can be noted between States. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted August 2 as the Remembrance Day of the Suffering of Roma during the Holocaust.³³ In Montenegro, in 2021, State institutions marked the International Day of Remembrance of Roma Holocaust Victims at the Montenegrin National Theatre.³⁴ In Serbia, December 16 marks the Day of Remembrance of the Roma Victims of the Second World War. Romania established August 2 as the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in 2020.³⁵

At the political and epistemic levels, there are several ongoing controversies regarding the use of the Holocaust terminology in relation to the Roma and Sinti victims. Some advocate against the inclusion of the Roma and Sinti experiences in the Holocaust framework, arguing that the drivers and methods of persecution, numbers, ideologies, conditions, and experiences of the Roma and Sinti differed from those of the Jewish victims. Knowing that the Nazis stamped Roma and Sinti as "criminals" characterized by "asocial" behaviors, some voices maintain that, in contrast with the racialization of the Jewish people, it was the behaviors of some Roma and Sinti, not their construction as an inferior race, that constituted the main reason for extermination.³⁶ In addition, those who oppose including the Roma victims under the Holocaust umbrella also bring into discussion the unique fate of the Jewish people targeted for annihilation.

However, not everyone agrees. Responses point at opposing evidence or double standards. Scholars like Michael Steward emphasize that the so-called Roma social deviance "was imagined as a function of their biological (racial) heritage."³⁷ And activists point out that Roma cannot be stamped as worthless victims of the Holocaust, and also stress that neither asociability nor criminality were behavioral patterns or inborn characteristics of Roma or any people.³⁸

The scholarly-oriented debates also critique the terminology of Roma genocide and Roma Holocaust. One argument is related to the complex history of the European Romani people, which includes more than the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis; thus, calling it the Roma genocide erases the genocidal nature of the Big Round-up genocide in Spain and other genocides. At the same time, some Romani scholars and activists argue against the term Holocaust, based on academic arguments about the religious roots of the term or preference for a term in the Romani language.

In the country reports, the researchers used different terms to refer to the Roma plight during the Holocaust and WWII. The variations in terminology were informed by distinct national histories and contexts, scholarly preferences, conformity with the terms used by the State institutions, or a preference for Romani terms. For example, in the report for Bulgaria, Hristo Kyuchukov explains: "I use the term 'genocide'/'Roma genocide' and not 'Holocaust' because this is the officially accepted term in Bulgaria, as I was informed by the representatives of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues in Bulgaria." In the report on Romania, Bogdan Chiriac also clarifies: "I will use both 'Roma persecutions' and 'Roma deportations' when speaking about specific anti-Roma measures adopted by the Antonescu regime and 'Roma genocide' when referring to the general measures of eugenic and criminal categorization of Roma and their inclusion in the 'national homogenization' policies implemented during World War II, two topics that have yet to be researched in great detail."

In the present regional study, we opted for an inclusive approach; thus we use Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide to describe the suffering of Roma victims from SEE during the Holocaust.

We use Roma Holocaust as a shortened version to refer to the Roma victims of the Holocaust, not a separate Holocaust, and Roma Genocide as a shortened version of the specific genocide perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies, acknowledging that it was not the only genocide targeting Romani people in Europe.

Porrajmos or Samudaripen. The debates about these terms rooted in the Romani language have often been led by Roma and pro-Roma scholars from various disciplines. The choices involve terms like Samudaripe(n), Mudaripe(n), Phar(r)aj(i)mos, Por(r)ajmos, and Kalí Traš.³⁹

To describe the Roma suffering during the Holocaust, scholars like Ian Hancock operate with the term Baro Porrajmos, which means "great devouring of human life."⁴⁰ Yet, as the author himself noted, "Porrajmos is an ugly word, well chosen for the ugliest event in our history. It can mean 'rape,' as well as 'gaping' as in shock and horror. Some people hesitate to say the word out loud."⁴¹ Also, authors like Marcel Courthiade point out the sexual roots of the word, which makes the term taboo in some communities.⁴² Adrian Furtună found in his research that Romanian Roma generally reject the term Porrajmos and prefer Samudaripen. And Courthiade and others argue that the word Samudaripen is "clear, it is understood, it is neutral and respectful."⁴³

In the country-based reports, the used terminology differed from one country to another. Alenka Janko Spreizer cited in her case study on Slovenia literature assertions that Roma leaders and researchers saw Samudaripen as a familiar term, which was also used in the former Yugoslavia and other countries.⁴⁴ However, the members of the Slovenian national delegation at the IHRA and Roma leaders/authors mainly employ the terms genocide of the Roma and Porajmos (written with one r in Slovenian language and with two in Romani).⁴⁵ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a prominent Roma association, Kali Sara, uses Samudaripen.⁴⁶ Other organizations, such as the Tuzla-based Bolja budućnost, use the syntagm Roma victims of the Holocaust.⁴⁷ The OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina refers, for example, unofficially, to August 2 as “Roma Holocaust Memorial Day/Samudaripe.”⁴⁸ Still, in Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically, there are no “competitive definitions or contestations of any term, as the Roma community is the only one advocating for the issue.”⁴⁹

In light of such a variety of arguments, sensitivities, differences, and power dynamics, in SEE, the Romani terms we use in this regional study to describe the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide are Samudaripen/Porrajmos.

National Records: The Plight of the Roma Before and During WWII and the Holocaust

Labeled as the “Other” and dealt with as “Orientals within,”⁵⁰ Roma people have been discriminated against throughout their history in Europe. Historically, the collective injustices against Roma, and anti-Roma policies, have built on previous practices and patterns of legitimizing enduring anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism through racist theories, research myths, and anti-Roma prejudice (e.g., biological inferiority, criminal behaviors, and savage cultural traits). Furthermore, during crises, manifestations of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism - preexisting oppressive and discriminatory measures, structural inequities, and animus toward the Roma - have typically intensified.⁵¹ Scapegoating patterns targeting Roma have been documented as early as the 1300s during the bubonic epidemic.⁵²

In SEE, not only were the Samudaripen/Porrajmos and the persecution and discrimination of Roma during WWII preceded by a long history of oppression; they also occurred in societies marked by simultaneous economic, political, and health crises, and stirred up by racist pseudoscience and eugenics. The totalitarian regimes coming to power in Italy and Germany, the ideology of national socialism announced by Adolf Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* and enforced by the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, the 1935 Nuremberg racial laws,⁵³ and scientific racism enabled and granted the mechanisms and tools of the Samudaripen/Porrajmos.

The history of SEE before and during WWII varied from one country to another. Consequently, the power over or decisions about the plight of Roma people were specific to each country. Thus, in this chapter, we distinguish between the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and an intensification of discrimination and other manifestations of anti-Roma racism during WWII, acknowledging the different roles and positions that countries adopted against Roma. Our reflections below refer expressly to the countries we name in specific examples, although one can easily observe similarities and overlaps, particularly in the Nazi ally countries. We do not intend to generalize or equate experiences.

3.1. **Eugenics and Racist Theories: Seeds of Mass Violence Outbreaks**

Pre-WWII, in SEE, primarily in the countries that participated in the Nazi atrocities, State institutions, politicians, academics, journalists, and non-Roma people used, amended, contextualized, and contributed to the global racist ideas, theories, attitudes, and narratives specific to those times. However, SEE scholars who launched eugenics and ideas that targeted Roma people in the 1930s built not only on global eugenics trends but also on a preceding Roma-focused body of racist work. Before scientific racism and eugenics became popular, scholars played a key role in labeling and problematizing Roma people⁵⁴ as wanderers, impostors, criminals, and filthy “elements” who represented a “moral” or “health” hazard to society.

Across the countries discussed in this study, we identified racist and biased scholarship on Roma throughout the first half of the 1900s. And we observed solid ties between racist ideas and national and local policies, particularly in countries that instructed and operated internment Roma camps and ghettos, genocide, or other forms of persecution.

In pre-WWII Romania, the local eugenic research influenced official decisions.⁵⁵ Leading eugenicists such as Iuliu Moldovan strove to introduce a new vision of society and politics that postulated the need to safeguard the unity and purity of the Romanian “neam” (a near-synonym of “race”) against the “corrosive” influence of ethnic minorities, which he called “dysgenic” due to their propensity to mix with Romanians, and thus, weaken the latter’s “biological and spiritual purity.”⁵⁶ The Romanian eugenicists failed to acquire the public visibility they sought, but their ideas caught the attention of opportunistic politicians and members of the far-right Iron Guard, who saw them as a new radical answer to the century-old Jewish and G*psy questions.⁵⁷

As early as 1935, eugenicists such as lordache Făcăoaru proposed special measures against “alien and dysgenic minorities,” particularly Roma, portrayed as an “onerous burden” on the country’s social security system and “a continuous threat” to the Romanian “neam’s” purity.⁵⁸ He advocated for the adoption of a national socialist-inspired program of isolating, sterilizing, or deporting nomadic Roma.⁵⁹ Such racist proposals found an echo in far-right circles and were popularized by Legionary members and ideological acolytes, who championed the adoption of racial laws intended to purge the Romanian nation of the looming “Gypsy biological and moral threat.”⁶⁰

Marshal Antonescu’s regime was not immune to the influence of this discourse. Following the eugenics-inspired proposals of Sabin Manuilă and others working

for the Central Institute for Statistics in Bucharest,⁶¹ the regime began to prepare new demographic policies intended to expel “undesirable minorities” from Romania. Some of the terminology used in those policy papers and other similar official documents was reminiscent of the racist articles connecting Roma to criminality, stressing their so-called “asocial nature” and labeling them as “public menaces and social dead-weights.”⁶² For instance, the Council of Ministers’ order to deport nomadic Roma, issued on May 22, 1942, instructed the police to “depopulate all urban centers first, and then rural settlements of all parasite, backward, and devious Gypsies who had squatted in these places and have only been tolerated until now due to our political leadership’s condemnable disregard.”⁶³

In Croatia, although only barely documented, eugenics and other racist ideas spread broadly in public discourse alongside national socialism. Martin Kuhar outlines several phases in the Croatian eugenics movement, which started in the late 1800s, led by “doctors that took foreign eugenic and racial ideas and brought them into Croatian context, extensively modifying them in the process.”⁶⁴ In 1936, Vladimir Dvorniković, a professor at the University of Zagreb, studied the “psychology of the Gypsies” and concluded that Roma were “wanderers of nomadic blood,” “perfidious to the bone,” and an “uncomfortable burden.”⁶⁵

During the war, Milan Gjukić, the principal eugenicist in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), wrote several papers on “racial hygiene” and the “less worthy.”⁶⁶ In 1942, Gjukić published the article *A Few Words on the Principles of Eugenics* in the *Medical Journal*, claiming that “in the case of sterilizing a dominant disease, one could basically terminate all evil hereditary qualities in only one generation, as both homozygotes and heterozygotes are sick, so no uncovered disease genes remain for reproduction.”⁶⁷ In the same article, Gjukić divided eugenics into “social and individual” eugenics. In 1944, Milan Gjukić published again an article entitled *The Question of the Influence of Brain Weight on Intelligence*, in which he discussed the results of anthropometrical research conducted on 1,261 individuals whom he divided into “6 social classes (0-V)”; the final one consisting of “beggars and wanderers.” He concluded that “despite the fact that differences in brain weight are not convincing, it is still interesting that in our material, it always decreases in the same direction across groups I-V.”⁶⁸ Social and individual eugenics included “restriction of migration of the less worthy,” along with “racial-hygienic consultation before marriage,” a “racial-hygienic view of the world,” and “exclusion of bad material via sterilization and prohibition of marriage with the less worthy.”⁶⁹

During the pre-war and war period, racist scholarship and eugenics became entangled with national socialist public discourse, with some organizations and leaders embracing such ideas. The Ustaša movement persevered during the pre-war period as a project under the protection of fascist Italy and, to a certain degree, Horthy’s Hungary. Factions of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), the leading political party in Croatia, embraced national socialist and fascist ideas. Later, some HSS members joined the Ustaša movement and supported the proclamation of the NDH.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the beginning of the 20th century, some intellectuals also started to write about the importance of national racial hygiene. In 1920, Uroš Krulj published a paper on racial hygiene in the magazine *Pregled*, which aimed “(...) to briefly introduce our more intelligent circles to the content and importance of na-

tional racial hygiene, as a very important factor in the struggle for the maintenance and prestige of a nation."⁷⁰ According to Krulj, "[r]acial hygiene, therefore, has two tasks: to eliminate all harmful influences that cause degeneration, and to eliminate existing racial flaws and shortcomings."⁷¹ Amila Kasumović argues that although Krulj did not openly name all those who could be considered "unsuitable," the text inferred which categories should have been under control: "it seems that the Roma, with all the prejudices that the local population had about them, could also be found on this imaginary list."⁷²

During WWII, Bosnia and Herzegovina was annexed by the NDH. As the Holocaust was unfolding, the construction of race by Bosnia's elites was particularly relevant and distinct in relation to Roma. *Korkut*, a consortium of elite scholars, published a paper based on German sources to prove that Muslim Roma were Aryans, thus "white Muslims" who should not be targeted.⁷³ They cited the works of Leopold Glück, a Polish Jewish doctor and anthropologist who had researched the Roma population. The report stated that "Gypsies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are of Islamic faith, are divided into white Gypsies and black Gypsies, so-called "čergaši". White Gypsies were, in all likelihood, of Gypsy origin, but by mixing with the local population have become assimilated and Croatized and have a long time ago forgotten their Gypsy language. They live in larger cities, predominantly deal with crafts, usually locksmiths, sometimes in business, live in families entirely equally as other Muslims of these areas, and they are almost indistinguishable from them."⁷⁴ The report was filed with the authorities, and consequently, the puppet Ministry of the Interior ordered the suspension of the persecution of Muslim Roma people. However, this regulation did not apply to all Muslim Roma, nor all the time.

Thus, although authors like Gladanac-Petrović maintain that "the Roma were not essentially considered a racial element, but a social problem,"⁷⁵ racial arguments were used to slow down or halt the deportations of Muslim Roma to camps. This specific way of dividing Roma into "white" and "black" Roma points to the racially framed definitions of Roma that Bosnian intellectuals crafted to persuade the Ustaša not to send certain groups of Roma to the camps. However, while it saved some lives, it also silently consented to the death of other human beings labeled as "black Roma."

On the territory of the present-day Republic of Slovenia, pre-WWII academics like Janez Trdina reproduced racist images from papers inspired by Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann's *G*psy Studies* and studies of criminology. A Slovenian ethnographer, Janez Trdina, constructed Roma as the criminal *Other* through their alleged consumption of food that was inappropriate according to Catholic morality, such as hedgehogs, squirrels, birds, and cats. Trdina portrayed Roma as thieves, beggars, fortunetellers, lazy people, inborn criminals, and cunning G*psies.⁷⁶

Another illustrative case in Slovenia is the work of the lawyer Fran Ogrin,⁷⁷ a district chief in Kranj, who discussed the fight against the "gypsy nuisance." Ogrin published an article entitled *Begging, Wandering, and Gypsiness in Social and Legal Attire*; in it he explicitly identified beggars, vagrants, and g*psies as evil. He described the need to "kill this evil" as the "gypsy nuisance is becoming more and more disgusting and sensitive." Ogrin maintained that several measures were needed: "To protect public order and morals to prevent the perpetual harassment of beggars, vagrants, and gypsies and to deter youths, as well as adults, to the detrimental effects of begging,

idleness and wandering, it is necessary, as already indicated above: 1. to apply existing legislation with all rigor; 2. that the killing of this evil is systematically regulated and deepened in legal and social terms." Furthermore, he appealed to decide whether gypsies "should be eliminated from the connection with the general society, in the way that they are relocated to a secluded island off the coast."⁷⁸

Ultimately, Ogrin explicitly claimed that "[s]ince gypsiness is essentially wandering and begging due to shirker-ness, all the above-mentioned legal provisions could be implemented in 'killing this evil.' Of course, the use of these regulations is difficult in the case of gypsies, who are characterized as being especially cunning and unstable. The killing of gypsiness then requires special orders."⁷⁹

In Serbia, ideas rooted in biological and cultural racism were also present in texts published at the beginning of the 20th century and the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the war. Quoting the text of the Serbian ethnographer Sima Trojanović, Tihomir Đorđević wrote in the early years of the 20th century that "gypsies are far behind from a cultural point of view, perhaps because the capacity of their skull is very small." Also, an article published in the *Policijski Glasnik*, a police review, stated that "at the site of the theft remains their strange [gypsy] stench, which is unforgettable (...) based on this, we can determine whether or not gypsies committed the theft, precisely because their stench remains (...) which we could describe as the smell of grease and the smell of mouse. The Serbs believe that this gypsy stench comes from the fact that their soul stinks."⁸⁰ Another philosopher and ethnopsychologist, Vladimir Dvorniković, concluded that Roma's "wandering nomadic blood, so contrary to any humble and systematic work, led them in their gypsy diaspora to a special life formula, insidious to the core: to live from people, but outside of human order and work."⁸¹

In Greece, authors like Kostas Biris promoted a disparaging view of the Greek Roma people as well. In his 1942 book, *The Gypsies. Folklore and Ethnological Study*, Biris maintained that Greek Roma lacked any sense of culture, being asocial and inherently criminal.⁸² He wrote: "[t]he Gypsies are cowards, they do not harm other people, and they accept insults with indifference. However, they have a strong subconscious inclination toward crime due to hereditary predisposition (...). Crime provokes in them a secret hedonism."⁸³ His ideas dominated the public debate about the Greek Roma during the Occupation and the 1950s.

In Bulgaria, during a typhus epidemic in the 1940s, only a small number of Roma died of the disease. This was explained through the lens of "relative racial immunity." Even so, in 1943, according to Christian Promitzer, "the Ministry of the Interior ordered the restriction of Romani movement within Bulgaria under the pretext that they were spreading typhus and other contagious diseases."⁸⁴

Nevertheless, across the region, in the countries included in this study, it is challenging to draw a line between and disconnect the influence of eugenicists and advocates of cultural or biological racism before and during WWII and the already existing theories of races, and the ingrained racist scholarship and myths about Roma. Such ideas and analytical frames have developed on a continuum, intersecting and building on each other, so that an accurate chronology of their evolution seems to be unrealistic.

Journalists played a crucial role in disseminating and propagating such narratives, as illustrated in the following examples. In Slovenia, we conducted an analysis of newspapers from 1938 to 1939, which revealed that Roma were systematically described as thieves, murderers, cunning persons, cheating prophets, “gypsy spawn,” “healers of infidelity,” and public order offenders.⁸⁵ Some articles used the word C*gan to describe poverty or behaviors considered immoral in the local Catholic environments. Others used the same term as a synonym for thefts committed by non-Roma populations or traveling persons and adventurers. Some newspapers also reinforced the “gypsy nuisance” labels while also condemning violence:

“It is well known that gypsies are a great nuisance for that region. (...) Meanwhile, the locals gathered around the gypsy houses and burned all houses. They tied one door tightly, and almost 10 children burned in the fire. Every gypsy, of course, wanted to save at least his bare life, but several gypsy women and children were injured. Namely, when they fled from the burning houses, the locals shot at them with rifles. Even though the gypsies are so evil, we condemn such treatment. They stay in the village anyway and will be an even more significant nuisance. And finally, one is also afraid of the gypsy revenge.”⁸⁶

We also identified dehumanizing and racist language in pre-WWII newspapers in other countries. In Serbia, some pre-war newspapers portrayed Roma using typical elements of prejudice: Roma people steal, take away children, don’t want to work, and live for the moment. And in Croatia, for example, the Zagreb daily newspaper *Jutarnji List* published in May 1933 an article with this headline: “Gypsies should be sent into forced labor to be of use.” It described Roma people as “parasites to society” and continued:

“They beg and steal from villages, but don’t want to work. Gypsies should simply be forced to work. They can fix trails, roads, and this way, they will at least help their community, which puts up with them and which should not do that for a moment longer. That perfidious, evil and semi-wild race should be firmly girded and forced to be useful to the society that it had been robbing and stealing from (...) and that still provides them with everything necessary for a carefree – even if a gypsy – life (...) enough suffering because of the gypsy tribe that presents a constant danger to citizens of our village, and even town. One should put an end to that perfidious semi-wild horde, it should be colonized and put to work (...)”⁸⁷

In 1941, several weeks after the proclamation of the NDH, a journal issued by the Varaždin - Croatian Unity Party also published an article entitled *Three Social-Political Problems*, which dehumanized Serbs as “dangerous and deadly snakes,” Jews as “parasites/pests,” and Roma as “undesirable parasites.” The article asserted that “[m]any newspaper reports and court proceedings speak of it. (...) Croatian people have healthy vital juices, and young and healthy forces – [and Croatians] must rid themselves of such perfidious parasites. That is demanded by our present, our future, our peace, and our freedom: that is demanded for future Croatian generations. All ulcers should be cut out of the national body (...)”⁸⁸

National and local authorities also used overt or covert racist ideas to propose policy documents or implement discriminatory measures against Roma. In Montenegro, at the beginning of the 20th century, authors like Valtazar Bogišić indicated that Roma were considered equal to Montenegrins at the normative level regarding economic and civil rights. However, in practice, Roma could not obtain property rights or access the judicial system. They were also excluded from “*ius connubii*,” i.e., marriages between Roma and Montenegrins.⁸⁹ Roma were welcomed to the clan’s⁹⁰ assembly and meetings, but they usually had no participative role in such events.

The discrepancy between the legal framework and its transposition in practice points to an ambivalent and generally discriminatory attitude towards Roma, which was also visible in the military. Military service was mandatory, but Roma were not expected to participate, although they had the right to carry a gun and volunteer to join the war. There were records of Roma being awarded medals of valor for their involvement in wars against the Ottomans, but the king would not allow Roma to hold a high position in the army. Many of these practices were rooted in the idea that Montenegrins were worthier than Roma.

In general, local authorities across SEE implemented a variety of overt anti-Roma measures. In Croatia, in a meeting of the District Council of the Croatian Peasant Party (a leading Croatian party at that time) in Bjelovar, a councilor suggested in April 1941 the forced colonization of Roma. His proposal was to start by “forcefully relocating (...) the true gypsy wanderers,” and then all other Roma, to islands in the Adriatic Sea or to some other area of Banovina.⁹¹ According to Danijel Vojak, a historian at the Institute of Social Science Ivo Pilar in Zagreb, the proposal stated that “(...) the gypsy problem due to their quick reproduction, as well as endangering others’ property, is the most important social issue for the village. Its solution would eliminate or mitigate many social evils which today worry Ban’s government and other factors of social providing [social welfare] (...)” Subsequently, “the Bjelovar District Council of the Croatian Peasant Party accepted the proposition and referred it to the Ban’s government.”⁹²

Some Albanian regulations and authorities also targeted Roma. Since the 1920s, letters of correspondence found in the State Archives provide evidence of instances when local and national institutions in Albania, sometimes at the request of non-Roma community members, discriminated against Roma. For example, the Shkodra, Kavaja, and Berati Municipalities evicted Roma at the request of non-Roma community members.⁹³

Also, in 1942, the Ministry of Interior ordered the Prefecture of Berat to evict Roma, those “unwanted people,” from their city and ordered local municipal offices to evict Roma from Albania: “under the protection of the order nr 4785/10 date 5/10/942.XX, the Interior Ministry authorizes that all Jevgjit [offensive word to describe Roma] who came lately from Bulgaria would be sent out of the country as unwanted elements. Please do let us know the actions taken. Prefect, Hasan Alizoti.”⁹⁴

In Bulgaria, in 1928, at the beginning of a typhus epidemic in Sofia, members of Parliament blamed the Roma, along with Turks, for the outbreak of the disease.⁹⁵ When the typhus epidemic reached the town of Zlatitsa in 1931, allegedly from a

Roma family, the health inspector recommended that Roma be restrained in a particular area as “their present housing among the Bulgarian population is dangerous, and the supervision of their cleanliness proves to be more difficult.”⁹⁶

Pre-war targeted systematic research measuring or accounting manifestations of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism, in particular institutional racism, across SEE is limited, but evidence, anecdotes, and archival documents, similar to those described above, point to a conjunction of anti-Roma State, journalistic, and academic narratives, laws, policies, behaviors and attitudes; many of them may have influenced or led up to the Samudaripen/Porraimos.

3.2. **The Plight of Roma during the Holocaust and WWII in SEE: A Synopsis**

In 1944, the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, coined the term “genocide” to describe the horrific crimes Europe had witnessed during the Holocaust. Lemkin defined his new concept as “the coordinated plan of different actions [aiming] at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups with the aim of annihilating the group themselves.” The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Lemkin also emphasized that “[g]enocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.”⁹⁷ In December 1948, the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defined genocide as “acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, or religious group.” The Genocide Convention became official international law on January 12, 1951, after 20 member States ratified it.⁹⁸

Many definitions have been proposed since, but in discussing the plight of SEE Roma during WWII, two elements of the definitions above are particularly relevant: the idea that individuals were killed not in their individual capacity but as members of a particular group, and the intent to destroy a group in whole or in part. Intent remains a constant topic of debate and is often difficult to document. Nevertheless, Paul Mojzes’s grasp of its legal stance underscores a relevant argument: “genocidal intent also applies to acts of destruction that are not the specific goal but the predictable outcomes or by-products of a policy, which could have been avoided by a change in that policy.”⁹⁹ To support his argument, Mojzes discusses the ruling of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY): “even when de-

struction is intended only against a specified or localized part of a group," that is still genocide.¹⁰⁰ Some of these arguments are important in understanding the plight of Roma in SEE during WWII.

The history of WWII in SEE was complex and intricate. Before and during WWII, fascist and Nazi powers, occupation, and overlapping borders complicated national contexts and dynamics. For example, Yugoslavia was "divvied up by not one, but four occupying forces."¹⁰¹

The synopsis below is a brief overview of a few significant events regarding the history of Roma in SEE during the Holocaust and WWII. It is intended to help readers better comprehend the following chapters on memory and distortion, but it cannot substitute for a thorough historical, sociological, or anthropological review of Roma history during the Holocaust and WWII.

Romania. In 1942, Marshal Antonescu, the Prime Minister of Romania for most of WWII and "Hitler's second-most important Axis ally,"¹⁰² and the Council of Ministers tasked the Ministry of Internal Affairs with deporting "undesirable" Roma to Transnistria. Consequently, in May 1942, a secret census was conducted to identify and keep track of all "undesirable" Roma living in Romania. A total of 40,909 persons were included on the list, of which 9,471 were nomads, and 31,438 were sedentary. While the nomadic Roma were targeted, the list of sedentary Roma included people with felony or misdemeanor convictions or without employment or a proven source of income, as well as people lacking proper documentation to prove ownership of a house or land.¹⁰³ These categories of Roma gave local law enforcement institutions wide latitude in determining the minimal threshold to meet the deportation criteria.

Highlighting "criminality," some authors suggest that the decision to deport Roma was a social measure; however, as the report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania underlined, "these deportations could not have been a purely social measure. Otherwise, this process of cleansing the country of socially problematic elements would have extended to the entire population, regardless of ethnic origin; yet it applied only to the Roma."¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, Roma families, including children, were included on the deportation lists, which also points to its racial underpinnings and Marshal Antonescu's ambitious plan of "ethnic homogenization."¹⁰⁵

The deportations took place during the summer and fall of 1942. Relying on the full cooperation of regional prefectures, the National Center for Nationalization, the Romanian railway system, and the Governorate of Transnistria, the Ministry of Internal Affairs organized the deportation in two major stages. During the first stage (June 1-August 15, 1942), 11,441 nomadic Roma (2,352 men, 2,375 women, and 6,714 children) were rounded up and deported to Transnistria using their own carts and horses.¹⁰⁶ During the second stage (September 12-20, 1942), 13,176 sedentary Roma (around 3,187 men, 3,780 women, and 6,209 children) were rounded up in several cities, forced to board freight trains, and transported in dreadful conditions to Transnistria. The deportees had their belongings and properties confiscated by the local authorities and were forced to leave their villages or home towns with barely enough food supplies and personal possessions they needed to survive.¹⁰⁷ Other Roma, such as people serving prison sentences or nomadic Roma who had managed to elude the gendarmes' search parties, were also targeted for deportation.

Map of the deportation of nomadic Roma by the Romanian Gendarmerie (June–August 1942)

Officially, the Roma deportees were supposed to be settled in “Gypsy colonies”, improvised settlements or evicted villages¹⁰⁸ on the banks of Bug River, in the counties of Golta, Ochakov, Berezovka, and Balta, and compelled to perform strenuous manual labor according to their skill in exchange for meager wages and food rations. In practice, the authorities in Transnistria entrusted with the supervision and exploitation of the deportees’ labor routinely settled Roma in makeshift, ghetto-like settlements and delivered insufficient and irregular food rations.

Gendarmes posted to guard the “Gypsy colonies” or German SS units patrolling the regions killed some of the Roma deportees. For instance, two mass shootings, one in Golta Country and the other at Trihati station, were reported in 1942.¹⁰⁹

Mojzes and other authors frame starvation and death by infection or infestation as extermination methods.¹¹⁰ And in Transnistria, between fall 1942 and spring 1944, thousands of Roma deportees perished due to the rapid spread of typhus, cold weather, inadequate housing, food shortages, and starvation. As the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania noted, “[t]he food rations established by the government were not observed; sometimes none would be distributed for weeks. The Roma were also not provided with firewood; so they could neither prepare their food nor warm themselves.”¹¹¹ In 1943, reporting back on the living conditions in Transnistrian camps, the commander of the Golta Legion of Gendarmes wrote: “(...) I have the honor to report the following, based on the information collected from the entire [Golta] county that I had confirmed the veracity: Jews are not given any food for months in a row. Likewise, with the Gypsies in the Golta camp, where there are 40 individuals [interned]. All of them are working and are being asked to do so, though they can barely stand due to starvation.”¹¹²

There is also scant information, derived mainly from survivors’ testimonies, about low-key officials and gendarmes in a position of power abusing the most vulnerable Roma, especially when their misdeeds could go unpunished. Here is an excerpt from historian Jean Ancel’s portrayal of the fate of Roma women:

“After being robbed by the Romanian Gendarmes and the representatives of the National Bank of Romania, after having been stripped of their gold, their carts, their horses, and their belongings amassed over hundreds of years, the Roma were left starving, naked, without the most basic means of subsistence. (...) But the most terrible situation in Transnistria was reserved for Roma women, considered a war bounty. Romanian gendarmes, like the Nazis, raped Roma women, who were deprived of their status as human beings and were eventually sentenced to death, and for these reasons, these “beasts with epaulets” could do with them whatever their heart desired.”¹¹³

According to official Romanian sources, approximately 11,000 Roma—a conservative estimate—perished in Transnistria.¹¹⁴ The means of extermination included deportations, internment, mass shootings, starvation, and death by infestation and disease.

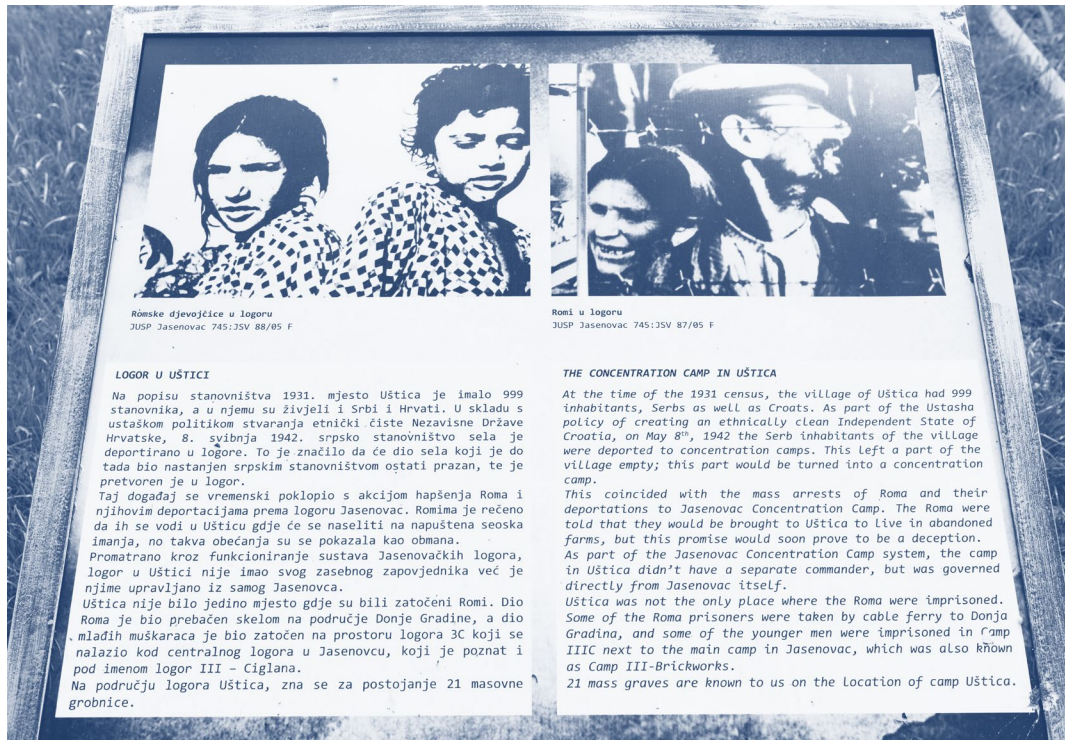
Croatia. The puppet Ustaša Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed in April 1941, containing a major part of today's Croatia and parts of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Roma lived in various areas before the war, including in Baranja and Međimurje, two areas that were not a part of NDH in 1941.¹¹⁵

The NDH territory was divided into German and Italian interest zones and forces via a special line. A 2021 report describes that “[w]hen Yugoslavia was invaded and partitioned in 1941, Hitler and Mussolini agreed to create an independent Croatian State under the fascist Ustaša leadership. The Ustaša immediately enacted racial laws targeting Serbs, Jews, and Roma. These were followed by policies of expulsion, extermination, and conversions. An estimated thirty thousand Jews or around 80% of the community were killed by the Ustaša or died when deported to Ustaša or Nazi concentration camps. A smaller number of Jews were spared as so-called ‘honorary Aryans,’ a category devised by the Ustaša for some Jews they deemed sufficiently Croatian. Others escaped to Italian-controlled territories or joined the Partisan forces.”¹¹⁶

Racial laws were put in place shortly after the proclamation of the NDH, including a law on racial affiliation adopted on April 30, 1941. It defined Aryans as persons who “originate from ancestors who are members of a European racial community or who originate from descendants of those communities outside of Europe.” The law also defined Gypsies as those “who originate from two or more ancestors of the second generation, who are Gypsy by race.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, in April 1941, NDH also adopted a law on the protection of the Aryan blood and honor of the Croatian people, which stipulated that a requirement for a “special permit for entering a marriage is necessary (...) for the marriage between a person who had among their ancestors members of non-European races and a person of the same origin, or between a person who had one or two second ancestors who were Jews or Gypsies by race or with a person of Aryan origin.”¹¹⁸ The Ustaša also established a Racial-Political Committee to “propose and draft laws, legal provisions, and orders, which concern the field of racial biology, racial policy and racial hygiene or eugenics,” “strive for the enlightenment of the people with regard to racial biology, racial politics and eugenics,” and take decisions in all “doubtful cases of racial affiliation.”¹¹⁹ At the same time, the Ustaša regime considered the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina an integrated part of the NDH. This standing was subsequently a decisive factor in the omission of Bosnian Roma of Islamic faith (“white Gypsies”) from the genocide perpetrated by the NDH.

The Ustaša plans against Roma focused largely on total extermination.¹²⁰ The extermination methods in Croatia involved deportations, mass killings, concentration camps, extermination sites, starvation, and disease.

Similar to Romania, one of the first measures the State organized against Roma was a census of the Roma population, which started in July 1941. The Ministry of Internal Affairs organized the census process of all Roma based on detailed guidelines regarding their racial affiliation.¹²¹ And immediately after the census, the mass liquidations of Roma started.



Ustaša Concentration Camp Jasenovac: Memorial area in Uštica, Jasenovac, Croatia. Location of 21 mass graves and information on Camp Uštica.
© Roma National Council (RNV), David Dragoljub Orlović

Mass arrests and killings were reported in multiple areas during the second half of 1941 and the beginning of 1942.¹²² And the construction of a concentration camp system had started soon after the proclamation of the NDH in 1941. The first one was the concentration camp Danica, near Koprivnica, where it is estimated that between 360 and 500 Roma were killed. But the system of concentration camps Gospić-Jadovno-Pag also played a key role in the first months of the Ustaša regime. Later that year, when it had to move the concentration camp from Gospić, the State found a location in the small town of Jasenovac. The Jasenovac compound included five camps, plus execution sites, and it was the largest death factory in the NDH and SEE, operating from the end of July 1941 until the end of WWII.

The Jasenovac “Gypsy camp” became the most extensive site of Samudaripen/Porrajmos in SEE during WWII.

Roma were victims of horrific acts of violence. In Jasenovac, according to some sources, guards forced some of the Roma inmates “to be gravediggers for the mass executions and also to rape and slaughter those marked for execution. Sometimes Roma prisoners were required to slaughter other Roma,” and then the guards would kill the remaining Roma.¹²³ Zorko Golub, a non-Roma imprisoned in the Jasenovac concentration camp, recalled:

“Ustaša went from village to village and captured Gypsies. They told them they would be colonized on deserted Serbian properties, that they would be ensured a decent life, and so the ‘Gypsy question’ would be solved in a ‘modern’ way. They wrote about it a lot in their press at that time, how the NDH solved the question of Gypsy colonization and how it turns them into useful members of human society. They were bragging about how the NDH dealt with that problem better than any other ‘civilized’ country.”¹²⁴

And Stjepan Soft, a non-Roma from the Cerna village offered this testimony: "I watched Ustaša forcing them [Roma]. I saw them [Ustaša] forcing everyone, from the youngest to the oldest. There were six-month-old children carried by their mothers on their chests, and there were also children of all ages, as well as older sick people, driven on carriages by other Gypsies (...)"¹²⁵

Paul Mojzes argues that "[c]ompared to the Nazi camps, the Jasenovac camps' methods of extermination were more personal and less industrial (no gas chambers) – the most mechanized killing, aside from deliberate starvation and disease, was throwing victims alive into the huge furnace at the brick factory."¹²⁶ In the case of Roma, the suffering went beyond internment and death in concentration camps. Some Roma were also sent to forced labor in the German Reich.¹²⁷ Others had their possessions destroyed or seized, "being offered on public auctions where local population bought it at 'symbolic prices.'¹²⁸



Ustaša Concentration Camp Jasenovac: Memorial area in Jasenovac, Croatia. Location of the central part of the concentration camp.

© Roma National Council (RNV), David Dragoljub Orlović

The total number of Croatian Roma killed during the Holocaust remains unknown. In Jasenovac alone, Vladimir Žerjavić estimated 10,000 Roma victims. Dragan Cvetković estimates between 18,000 and 20,000 Roma people were killed.¹²⁹ And the Jasenovac Memorial Site list of individual victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp from 1941 to 1945 contains 16,173 (19.45% of all named victims of Jasenovac) Roma killed in Jasenovac.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since the NDH annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of WWII, the Ustaša regime policies were applied also on its territory.

On the geographical territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one element of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide was country-specific: some of the elites worked to protect Muslim Roma.

The Islamic Community, the highest Muslim religious authority in the former Yugoslavia, played a key role in the protection of Muslim Roma. Archival documents from 1939 show that the religious authorities in Sarajevo already had an interest in the status of Roma Muslim communities in Yugoslavia, especially in southern Serbia.¹³⁰ At the same time, Bosnian Roma were primarily Muslims, and according to the American scholar Emily Greble, “Sarajevo’s Muslims recognized that the racial classification of Roma had broader implications for Muslims in Croatia. In a state where racial status determined one’s right to live, Muslims were justifiably wary of any ideology that defined any part of their religious community as an inferior group. They realized that if the new rulers could label some Muslims, in this case, Roma, non-Aryan, nothing prevented them from reclassifying other Muslims in the future.”¹³¹ Thus, both genuine concerns and political agendas impacted the status of Muslim Roma.

Framing Bosniak Roma as “white” and “black” G*psies influenced the targets of genocidal policies.

As “white” Roma were considered to have assimilated into the general population and have property and livelihood similar to the dominant population, they were to be protected against the genocide. And thus, an order from the NDH Ministry of Interior dated July 3, 1941, in Zagreb, ordered local and district authorities to collect data on Roma and underlined that “for each head of the family, it needs to be specified whether he is a ‘wanderer-čergaš’ or if he lives in a house, and on whose land.”¹³²

During the NDH census, some municipalities, such as Banja Luka, submitted lists of Roma to the Administrative Department of the Ustaša Headquarters or participated in mass arrests.¹³³ But others refused, stating that they did not have Roma people or were under Italian occupation and the Italian authorities “do not allow any correspondence with Croatian authorities.”¹³⁴

Several extermination methods were used in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including deportations to concentration camps. For example, in August 1941, around 630 Serbs, Jews, and Roma from villages between Travnik and Turbe, including Mudrik, Vitovlje, Turbe, Karaula, Varošluka, Komar, Goliša, and Trebeuša, as well as the surrounding villages and those adjacent to Travnik, were sent to Jasenovac. None of them ever returned to their homes.¹³⁵ In April 1942, gendarmes from Vitez and Ustaša in Travnik also sent the Muslim Roma of Rijeka to Jasenovac.¹³⁶

Orders were also put in place to formalize deportations. In May 1942, the commanders of armed regiments in the region were ordered to cooperate with district authorities to round up all Roma in their territories and take them to the Jasenovac concentration camp.¹³⁷ In compliance with this directive, for example, in May 1942, all Roma in Tešanj were transported to Jasenovac and subsequently killed. It is believed that the man responsible for their deaths was Adem-aga Mešić, a high-ranking Muslim Ustaša leader from Tešanj. One Roma survivor from Tešanj, Mujo Alikić, who managed to evade deportation, testified that a group of Roma went to Mešić to ask for help, but he turned them back.¹³⁸ Smail Galijašević writes about the hypocrisy and cynicism of Adem-aga Mešić, who participated in writing a petition to the Ustaša authorities seeking protection for “white Gypsies” and part of the Serbs near Jajce, and did nothing to protect the Roma from Tešanj who were Muslims.¹³⁹

Some municipalities did not comply with the NDH orders. In August 1942, the municipal authorities in Prnjavor (Kotarska oblast u Prnjavoru) wrote to the police authorities in Nova Gradiška announcing that this municipality did not round up Roma since they were Muslims and according to “decision number 4397/42 dated 14.6.1942 in the similar order from the Ustaša Surveillance Service number 32753/42 dated 9.6.1942, Gypsies of Muslim faith must not be bothered, as well as Gypsies who have permanent residence and a decent civic occupation.”¹⁴⁰

Family massacres were also committed. Members of the Mehić and Džafić families from Kruščica were arrested and killed in April and May 1942 in the Kruščica camp. In June 1942, the Zahirović and Osmanović families from Krčevina were also arrested and killed in the same camp.¹⁴¹ In August 1943, SS Prince Eugen Division members barricaded 36 Roma, mainly from the Ahmetović family, in a barn in the Podorašac village near Konjic and tossed bombs inside.¹⁴²

The Ustaša regime was not the sole persecutor of the Roma population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All armed factions, who fought on this territory - Ustaša, Četnik, Partisan, Nazi Germans, Italians, 13th SS division - killed Roma. In 2007, the Jasenovac Memorial Center published the Nominal List of Victims from Jasenovac Concentration Camp,¹⁴³ which contained 935 names of Roma victims from Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴⁴

The number of Bosnian Roma killed remains unknown, and the lack of data makes it difficult to approach this issue accurately. The demographic changes occurred from the 1930s to the 1940s require further analysis. In the 1931 census, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were 11,272 Roma; in the 1948 census, there were only 442 mentioned.¹⁴⁵

The extermination methods used against Roma from Bosnia and Herzegovina included torture, family massacres, deportations, concentration camps, executions, and starvation.

Serbia. During WWII, present-day Serbia¹⁴⁶ was divided into different occupation zones. This overview focuses on the central area, including Belgrade, a territory that was under direct German occupation.

The Nazi invasion of 1941 was followed by racial legislation, internment, and mass killings. On the Serbian territory under German occupation, Roma and Jewish people had to wear a yellow armband, were forbidden to use public transport, were fired from their jobs, and were not allowed to go to public places or hospitals. The main order that established what Roma and Jews were allowed to do and what was forbidden, segregating them from the rest of the society, was issued on May 30, 1941, a month and a half after the Nazis had entered Belgrade. Two months later, however, the same German authorities issued another order. The racial laws were to be implemented only against the Roma individuals who could not prove that they had a stable job and a permanent residence. As reported in Belgrade, Roma lived in impoverished settlements at the periphery¹⁴⁷ and were not considered reliable in their work relations. Employment opportunities were scarce, so Roma were easily labeled as thieves, liars, and cowards.¹⁴⁸

In July 1941, the Gestapo opened the Banjica concentration camp in Dedinje, Belgrade, primarily for communists. Roma, Jewish people, and Serbs were also interned there, and many were soon killed.¹⁴⁹ And in August 1941, the Gestapo established Topovske Šupe,¹⁵⁰ a concentration camp in Belgrade for male Jews, destined to be executed. At the end of October, about 1,500 Roma from Belgrade were also detained there, after having been arrested by Serbian collaborationists on German orders. Many of them were shot, especially at the Jabuka killing site, not far from Belgrade. The majority of Roma and Jews interned in Topovske Šupe were killed. Moreover, as in Croatia, some Roma were exposed to additional trauma, being “ear-marked for digging mass graves, collecting the clothes of the victims, burying the dead after execution, and then usually being executed themselves.”¹⁵¹

Roma women and children were interned in the Sajmište camp, along with Jewish women and children in December 1941. Most of them were released as they were able to certify their residence in Belgrade. About 60 of them, according to available sources, died in the camp from hunger and disease, while an undetermined number were killed along with Jews.¹⁵²

While Serbian Roma were interned and/or killed in concentration camps like Crveni Krst, Sajmište, Belgrade Fair Grounds, or Topovske Šupe, mass shootings of Roma took place in several other Serbian cities, such as Kragujevac, Šabac, Kruševac, Leskovac, and Niš. Roma also died in the October 1941 killings in Kragujevac and during the 1942 Novi Sad raid.¹⁵³



Topovske Šupe concentration camp,
Belgrade, Serbia.
© Centre for Public History

The decision to physically eliminate the Roma population was taken by the Nazi occupier but was also implemented with the compliance or zeal of complicit Serbian forces. In 1941, the officers and members of the police who had most distinguished themselves for their anti-communism, nationalism, and sense of the State became the principal members of the new collaborationist police, which in addition to continuing the hunt for communists, carried out Nazi tasks related to the arrests of Jews and Roma and the confiscation of their assets.

Moreover, on several occasions, the collaborationists massacred Roma. In cases where the Germans wanted to execute a certain number of civilians, the local Serbian authorities decided to rescue the hostages of Serbian nationality and substituted Roma.¹⁵⁴

It is therefore essential to analyze and understand the context in which the collaborators operated, their responsibility, and their willingness to take part or not in the genocide ordered by the Germans.

The way in which the collaborators operated¹⁵⁵ illustrates that they were prepared to commit genocide against Roma.¹⁵⁶ In the city of Kragujevac, when the Nazi authorities ordered the shooting of more than 2,500 civilians in retaliation for the killing of ten and wounding of 26 German soldiers, Serbian voluntary troops, known as "Ljotićevci," identified about 250 Roma and delivered them to the Nazis in exchange for the Serbian hostages.¹⁵⁷

There were also reports of Roma being arrested or killed as supporters of the Partisans. In September 1941, in Sremčica, near Belgrade, collaborationist authorities arrested a group of Roma for supporting the Partisans with supplies. Deported to Banjica, they were subsequently shot. In addition, in 1943, in the village of Kopljare, the Četniks slaughtered about twenty Roma because they had been discovered helping the Partisans.¹⁵⁸

Scholars like Đurić, Acković, and Haliti maintain that tens of thousands of Serbian Roma were victims of atrocities.¹⁵⁹ Other sources indicate that about 2,500 Roma were killed in 1941-1942 in Serbia under the German occupation.¹⁶⁰ But there is no agreement on the total number of victims. Nevertheless, we know that in 1942, a SS leader reported to the German commander that "[t]he Jewish question, as well as the Gypsy question, has been completely solved. Serbia is the only land in which the question of the Jews and Gypsies had been solved."¹⁶¹ Issued more as a political statement, this claim did not take into consideration exceptions (e.g., Jewish people "married to Gentiles"), escapees, and others. The real number of the Roma victims is still to be determined. The extermination methods in Serbia included internments in concentration camps, mass shootings, massacres, starvation, and disease.

Slovenia. During WWII, Slovenia was divided between four different occupying regimes. Thus, Roma and Sinti became victims of the Nazi forces, Italian fascist authorities, Hungarian collaborationist regime, and a small territory at the border was occupied by the Croatian collaborationist regime. Roma and Sinti people were sent to an internment camp in Italy¹⁶² and concentration camps in Germany or within Nazi-occupied territories, such as Serbia.

Paradigmatic victims of the Nazi persecution in the territory of present-day Slovenia were the communities in northern Slovenia, which became part of the German Reich in 1941.

Sinti were among the first people in the region of Upper Carniola and some in Carinthia to be arrested and brought to the Gestapo prison in Begunje in April 1941.

Historians report that around 300 Roma and Sinti were killed or taken to the Gestapo prisons in Begunje in Upper Carniola and Šentvid in Ljubljana and subsequently transported to concentration camps in Europe, including Jasenovac, or were exiled to Serbia.¹⁶³ According to the Begunje prison register, the number of these people, who were identified as Gypsies – Roma,¹⁶⁴ was 117.¹⁶⁵ The majority of them were Sinti with the family names Rajhard, Reichard, Mueller, Ocepek, Petan, Roi or Roj, Jungvirt, Seger, Taubman, and Žagar.¹⁶⁶ However, to date, scholars have not been able to determine what happened to them.¹⁶⁷ Researchers could not find traces of their arrival in occupied Serbia. Vita Zalar, a Holocaust historian, couldn't identify any sources regarding their returning to their initial homes.

Nevertheless, some of the Rajhard families may have returned home, surviving their ordeal.¹⁶⁸ Our archival research confirmed that some Sinti returned from Serbia. For example, 26 members of the Rajhard family, the expelled Sinti from Upper Carniola, returned to Slovenia from Serbia on November 10, 1944. They were enlisted on the Liberation Front record for repatriation from Serbia.¹⁶⁹ In the archive documents of the Liberation Front, the same names as those enlisted in the Begunje prison register can be documented, with certain exceptions.

The exact number of Roma who were deported from Slovenia to Auschwitz on August 2, 1943, was 77, more specifically 30 men and boys and 47 women and girls.¹⁷⁰ Along with the victims of the Nazis, Roma were also victims of the fascist Italian occupation regime.¹⁷¹ Slovenian authorities, who collaborated with Italian occupying forces in Črnomelj or Novo Mesto, had the task of producing a list of local Roma and arresting them. The censuses may have been ordered to support the deportations, but historians have not yet found written evidence in this regard.¹⁷²

On the territory of the Ljubljana Province, fascist authorities did not systematically persecute the Roma, but officers issued warnings that the authorities should consider their internment. A telegram from the Prefect of Teramo, on July 23, 1942, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the internment of a larger group of Roma from the territory of Ljubljana. There were 78 Roma individuals from 17 families.¹⁷³ They, including their children, were sent to the Tossicia concentration camp in the province of Teramo, labeled as "socially dangerous elements."¹⁷⁴ Some were also imprisoned in Gonars and Chiesanuova di Padova.¹⁷⁵

The Italian occupational regime also killed 16 Roma: one soldier and 15 civilians.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, on the territories occupied by Hungarians, the Roma victims were transported to forced labor camps, and 6 Roma were killed as hostages.¹⁷⁷

In Slovenia, Roma and Sinti also died as war victims. For example, Roma and Sinti who were members of the Partisan Movement were killed by German troops. However, some Roma were also members of the *Slovene Homeguard*, a collaborationist army directly financed by German occupational authorities. Some of them died in combat.

The Slovenian WWII history also included Partisan executions of Roma. Partisan units killed Roma families from Vrbljen and Podpeč as the Partisans suspected them to be potential informants for the Italian army. In Notranjska, the Partisans executed at least 70 Roma in the liberated territory.¹⁷⁸

So far, historians have reported on five different Partisan killings of Roma. However, according to historians, Partisan killings were not based on racial persecution and, consequently, could not be classified as genocide based on racial grounds. Komac, for example, claims that the 6 Roma killed in Turnišče were shot as conscripts, who refused to go to the army: "The statement that they were shot as hostages is not true. They were shot as conscripts evading military service."¹⁷⁹ Some scholars interpret those killings as a consequence of a latent antigypsyism in society. Yet, anti-gypsyism is racism; thus, it has racial grounds. However, due to the lack of extensive historical research, this issue is still a subject of distortion and revisionism.¹⁸⁰

Historical sources do not provide many insights on the dimension of gender violence and sexual harassment during the Holocaust.¹⁸¹ Yet, when Vita Zalar interviewed three Romani activists from Prekmurje, they mentioned that after WWII, many children in Romani villages in Prekmurje were born with blue eyes and considered this fact a legacy of the occupation. Years later, Zalar has rightfully argued that this was a very unreliable self-racializing idea, as Roma can also have blue eyes. But Zalar suggested that the Roma children with blue eyes might still point to sexual violence against Roma women in the occupied regions.¹⁸² However, Zalar has not found any official complaints of Roma women reporting violence during WWII.¹⁸³

The estimated number of Slovenian Roma killed during WWII is at least 207 people, with 193 victims coming from the Ljubljana Province.¹⁸⁴ Also 73 documented Roma victims were killed by Partisans. Historians¹⁸⁵ categorized the violence of Partisans against the Roma as a war crime and not as genocide because high-ranking Partisan officials never ordered systematic killings of the Roma. The extermination methods in Slovenia included transportation to concentration camps, mass killings, and forced labor.

Kosovo*. During WWII, parts of Kosovo* were integrated into Italian-occupied Albania and later Nazi Germany. In 1941, most of Kosovo's* territory was annexed by fascist Italy and led by the Albanian puppet government, which operated under the control of fascist Italy until 1943. After the capitulation of Mussolini's government in 1943, Nazi Germany took over Kosovo*.

The Italians deported Roma and Jews to concentration camps in other parts of Yugoslavia, but also to Buchenwald and Mauthausen.¹⁸⁶ The fascist Italians may have not fully implemented the racist laws, thus allowing Jewish people from the Balkans to flee to Albania via Kosovo* and blurring even more the Roma experience and everyday life from 1941 to 1943. However, when the German forces took over Kosovo* in 1943, the situation changed dramatically. Roma were persecuted and murdered.¹⁸⁷

Similar to Serbia, during WWII and Nazi Germany's occupation of Kosovo*, Roma were required to wear yellow armbands to distinguish themselves from non-Roma. Men were rounded up randomly and killed in the fields. Roma men were used as forced laborers in Kosovo* and in camps in Germany or factories in Berlin.

Roma were killed arbitrarily, and as one Roma survivor recounted, “the Germans killed Roma as if they were killing sparrows.”¹⁸⁸ They looted their homes and raped the women. Roma lived under constant threats and suffered from hunger and also suffered violence from Nazi collaborationists.¹⁸⁹

WWII also found Roma people living in extreme poverty and facing racism, which worsened during the fascist Italy and later the German Nazi occupation. As one of the survivors of WWII recounted, “before the war, Roma lived very poorly. We were just slaves to the Serbs and Albanians. When Germans came in 1941, we were slaves for them too.”¹⁹⁰

The forms of racism and violence Roma lived with were manifold. Roma were subjected to forced labor, beatings, killings,¹⁹¹ and gender-based violence.¹⁹² During WWII, “the Germans would enter into a village and force Roma to do unpaid forced labor”¹⁹³ and often forced them to “dig trenches.”¹⁹⁴ Also, Nazis “would round up Roma from their homes. They would blindfold Roma and take them away,” as one survivor remembered.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, while living in constant fear, Roma also suffered from starvation: “[d]uring the war, we suffered a lot from hunger. My dad worked all day for a piece of bread during the war. He had to work all day for one loaf of bread because we were many children in the house.”¹⁹⁶

Several testimonies of Roma survivors also pointed to acts of “kindness from strangers” and the protection they received from neighbors or other people in Kosovo*. A Roma survivor recounted that “a Turkish man, Secer Bego, and another Albanian saved us. They were good people, and they saved all the Roma because Germans respected this man.”¹⁹⁷

Although the exact number remains unknown, approximately 1,000 Kosovar* Roma were thought to have been killed in WWII.¹⁹⁸ The extermination methods included round-ups, transportation to concentration camps, forced labor, killings, rape, and starvation.

Montenegro. Italy occupied Montenegro from 1941 to 1943; then Germany took over. However, eight decades later, the genocide and Holocaust scholarship has focused on Montenegrin Roma only sporadically. And thus, much of the Roma history remains hidden or unwritten.¹⁹⁹

There were two concentration camps in Montenegro: Forte Mamula and Antivari. The available archival sources show that Forte Mamula was used for both male and female civilians and hostages and was operated by the military. However, we do not know if Roma were among them, as the military only recorded sex, religion, and age.²⁰⁰ We also know that women and children were sent to camps, but have no information if Roma were amongst them and what kind of atrocities they suffered in the camps.

Montenegrin people were also sent to camps in Albania and Dalmatia. For example, there is evidence that 150 “political arrestees” from Kotor were sent to Durres (Durazzo); and in July 1941, around 1,000 Serbian sympathizers, Jews, and communists were sent to camps.²⁰¹

Kapralski argues that under Italian occupation (Montenegro, part of Slovenia) or Bulgarian occupation (Macedonia), “generally, Roma were not persecuted although they may have been sent to internment or labor camps.”²⁰² It is possible that Roma were interned along with Serbian sympathizers, Jews, and communists, as Roma joined the anti-fascist movement of Josip Broz Tito, similar to other minority groups joining the fight against Nazis and their allies. Lutovac, for instance, shares the story of a Roma shoemaker who refused to clean the boots of Germans who executed students in Kragujevac.²⁰³ Roma also joined Partisan units.²⁰⁴ And some of them were forced to flee repeatedly to save their lives. Vojak re-tells the story of Fazlija Adović, who described in detail how he and his family escaped:

“I remember very well the bombings. When the bombing started, we were in Belopavlice. That was a very dangerous bombing. Hitler bombed us. We escaped through the Zeta River. We had to destroy our camp so the occupier wouldn’t think it was a concentration lager. Our women left their children behind because they were running so fast to escape. Later they returned to the place where our tents were and found their children. With great suffering, we survived this situation. Then we escaped to Sjevne, but Hitler bombed there too. From there, we escaped through Mala Rjeka, Vijakuca, Bjeleblje, and Nozica. Then we came down to Moraca River, through the mountain, and got to Kolasin. On the road, while escaping, we walked over dead people. In Kolasin, it was very dangerous too. My mother had to step on dead people to get closer to us. My God, that was terrible to see.”²⁰⁵

Other Roma people hoped to find salvation by leaving Montenegro. For example, Darinka Sejdović lived in Podgorica for six months during the occupation before fleeing to Albania. She was twelve years old, and she remembers Roma from Konik, Vrela, and Zagorič (parts of Podgorica) areas being tortured and killed by Germans. She also remembers girls being abducted, some never to return. To save themselves, they would hide in caves. On one occasion, as the bombing was unfolding, she lost half of her family on their way to the caves. Fleeing in Albania was difficult as she had a leg injury, and she also suffered from typhus, but she survived. In Albania, locals and refugees suffered mostly from Balists, Albanian fascists. She witnessed soldiers abducting women from their houses and keeping them in the old bakery where they would rape them, and no one could intervene.²⁰⁶

Rukija Omerović also remembered that soldiers abused girls and women. Those who would try to escape would be beaten or worse. This was especially true when Italian soldiers were around. She also recalled the mass execution of the people near the very same bakery where women were abducted and raped. She told the story about seeking refuge in the caves, as well as of the horrors they survived trying to escape air raids.²⁰⁷

Regardless of if they were Roma or not, those who aided Partisans were severely punished. After being released from the camp, Desanka Aziri was arrested and detained for 15 days in Podgorica, accused of being a communist and awaiting execution. But in the end she was released.²⁰⁸

Roma were killed by Nazi forces and their collaborators along with other victims and subjected to mass confinement, killing, rape, abductions, and torture. The number of Roma victims from Montenegrin territory remains unknown.

Bulgaria. During WWII, Bulgaria was a formal ally of Nazi Germany. Most allied countries followed the oppressive policies of Germany toward the Jewish and Roma people. Nevertheless, Bulgaria is often portrayed as an exception, having had a government that did not deport the Roma and Jewish people to concentration camps. However, Bulgarian leadership and historians have also sometimes neglected historical facts. For instance, during WWII, Bulgaria occupied territories in Greece and today's North Macedonia. And from those occupied territories, in 1943, 11,343 Jews were sent to the Treblinka concentration camp in Poland, where they were murdered.²⁰⁹

The plight of Bulgarian Roma during the Holocaust has not been sufficiently researched. Scholars have not found evidence of Roma being deported to concentration camps. While oral history narratives point at attempts to deport Roma, in the absence of archival documents, Bulgarian historians and other experts are reluctant to take into consideration that such attempts were made.²¹⁰ However, in some instances, “[e]yewitness accounts of decisive events may be as valuable as official dispatches and reports. It is in such versions, especially, that the human element becomes manifest, affording insights not to be found in documents.”²¹¹

Some Roma people, who were children and teens during WWII, remembered and shared with their families their stories about attempts to deport them. Such was the family of Hristo Kyuchukov:

“At the end of 1943 or the beginning of 1944, my father, who was a baby, all his siblings, and my grandparents were sent together with other Roma from the settlement, some 3,000 persons, to the train station in my native town Provadiya, close to Varna. At the train station, soldiers with guns, dogs, tanks, and trains with boxcars used for transporting animals were waiting for them. The Roma were told that they were to be sent to another country. The uniformed Bulgarian soldiers started to push and shove them onto the trains when an order was issued to halt the operation and send them back to their homes. The Roma were not to be deported. Several days later, those Roma were ordered to go to the margins of the town, where a mass grave had been excavated for them. The families were put standing in order in front of that huge pit, and they knew that they were to be killed because Bulgarian army soldiers in uniform with guns were lined up in formation on the other side of the pit, ready to open fire. Then a new order was issued that the Roma were not to be killed, and they were commanded to return to their homes. After a few months, in 1944, the Roma were interned in villages around Provadiya, where they were forced to do hard manual labor. They were treated like prisoners, receiving a little food for each family member. (...) The Russian army liberated Bulgaria in September 1944, and Roma were sent back then to their homes.”²¹²

Stories about their parents or grandparents were also shared by Siyana Romanova from Provadiya in northeast Bulgaria,²¹³ Anton Karagyozev from Plovdiv in southern

Bulgaria,²¹⁴ Biser Alekov from northeastern Bulgaria,²¹⁵ Tsetska Hadzhigeorgieva from Vidin in northwestern Bulgaria,²¹⁶ Valeri Lekov from Kyustendil in southwest Bulgaria,²¹⁷ and Dimka Nedkova from Sofia.²¹⁸ For example, Dimka Nedkova's grandmother told her of the attempt to kill Roma in the settlement Fakulteta. According to Dimka's grandmother, one day, soldiers ordered the members of the Roma community to go to the cemetery near their settlement, where they dug a big hole. The soldiers were ready to kill the members of the community when they received a new order and sent the people back to their homes.

In addition, several survivors shared other types of experiences. Kada Veyselova (92 years old) lived in a village in northwest Bulgaria. She remembered that before WWII, Roma were the first inhabitants of the village. When the Roma came to that place, it was not even a village; Bulgarians came there later to settle and build up a village. During the war, the German soldiers went to the village, but they did not harm the local Roma. The village was inhabited only by Roma and Bulgarians, and the soldiers easily could recognize them. It was the opposite – they were friendly and polite as Wehrmacht soldiers stationed in Bulgaria. They often gave Roma children chocolate or provided Roma women with soap, then a luxury. The Bulgarians from the village, however, adopted an aggressive approach toward the Roma. Kada described how young Bulgarians often attacked the Roma quarter, and some of the houses were burned during the winter, and the Roma had to live outside without any shelter in the bitter cold.²¹⁹

But Hasan Medmed Halimolu (95 years old), an ethnic Turk from the town of Provadiya in northeast Bulgaria, witnessed a different situation.²²⁰ He saw Roma sent to the train station and the mass grave on the outskirts of the town. The Roma and Turkish houses were mixed at that time, but only the Roma were selected to be sent to the train station. The police knew in which houses the Roma lived.

He also remembered that the Roma were sent to the villages around Provadiya, where they had to do hard manual work, and they did not have the right to come back to the town for many years, even after 1944, when Bulgaria was liberated from fascism.

The Roma started to return to their houses after the 1950s. They were settled and had professions. They were peaceful people, and no conflicts between Roma and Turks in the years before, during or after the war were recorded. But there were cases when Bulgarians attacked Roma houses and assaulted the Roma.²²¹

Such accounts of harassment may have been part of random local initiatives, implemented without permission or even consultation with national institutions. However, beyond such reports, there is little information on the daily life of the Roma before and during WWII and which types of abuse they were subjected to in Bulgaria.

It is also important to emphasize that while conducting research in the archives, we encountered situations where the archive's computer system listed a Roma-related document, but the original document was missing. In one case, the archivists explained that during the communist period, archivists destroyed some documents they considered unimportant.

Based on our literature review and the interviews conducted in this project, we cannot conclude that the Holocaust, or a Roma genocide, took place in Bulgaria during WWII. There was no government policy to kill the Roma, and there is no evidence in the archives regarding orders or other official decisions taken with the aim of annihilating Roma in Bulgaria. It is possible that the attacks, killings, forced labor in work camps, and aborted attempts to round up Roma for possible deportation to concentration camps were decisions made by local authorities or by pro-Nazi Bulgarian groups. However, in our research, we identified oral history of sustained psychological harassment, attacks on Roma settlements, the maintenance of constant fear of attacks, murderous violence, executions, economic restraint, and targeted persecution of Roma before and during WWII.

North Macedonia. From April 1941 to August 1944, today's North Macedonia was under Bulgarian military and administrative rule. Several laws, policies, and testimonies referred to the atrocious conditions of Roma. For example, the Council of Ministers' decision no. 4567 ordered to regulate the "Jewish question", and other related issues that concerned Jewish people. And an amendment of the Law on State Protection prohibited them from entering "into marriages and sexual relations with persons of Bulgarian or close origin." In fact, "such marriages concluded after the entry into force of the Law are considered invalid." The order also referred to marriages between Roma and persons of Bulgarian origin.²²²

Thus, the laws and orders expressly referred to the Jewish population, while Roma were only mentioned in areas where they had mutual relations with the Jews. Roma were not explicitly perceived as a social threat. However, they were not welcomed by Bulgarians and were targeted because they were not seen as Aryans.

The atrocities in the territory of North Macedonia during WWII have been documented and institutionalized as mainstream history, neglecting what happened to Roma in that period. But several attempts to collect testimonies have been recorded. The testimonies included in books by Mirdita Saliu²²³ and Rufat Jashari²²⁴ demonstrate that the Bulgarian, German, Italian, Albanian, and Yugoslav leaderships considered and treated Roma as an unwanted population on the territory of North Macedonia. Yet, many Roma participated in Yugoslav Partisan activities.²²⁵

In a testimony²²⁶ from survivor Neshat M. from Kumanovo, Rufat Jashari learned that between 1941 and 1943, Bulgarian and German troops often patrolled the city of Kumanovo and surrounding villages, especially in the region of Lipkovo, because that area was extremely rich with high-quality tobacco, which was regularly confiscated. During their transit, the troops sometimes executed locals for disobeying or not carrying out the given orders. Even at the very beginning of the war, in the spring of 1941, Neshat remembered that during the bombing of Kumanovo, several bombs ended up in the Roma settlement of Sredorek, which was fatal for several Roma, including children.

When Bulgarian and German forces arrived in the Otlja and Matejce villages, they detained hundreds of Roma of different ages; the children were stabbed with bayonets in their extremities, ostensibly to prevent them from crying and screaming.²²⁷

Rufat Jashari also interviewed Malik N. from Orizare, who was born in 1930. Malik described how, in 1943, the Bulgarian police forces arrived in their village, accompanied by a small group of German officers and sergeants. They were sent to their region to destroy the Roma and to commit robbery and confiscate tobacco. Roma were loaded into trucks like cattle, understanding that they were heading east to the city of Kumanovo. Bulgarian police officers started shouting insults at the crowd. People were pushed against a high wall, and a firing squad was preparing to execute them without “trial.” Earlier, a group of about 70 elderly Roma from the region of Lipkovo had been ruthlessly executed because they could not walk, and it was difficult to lift them into trucks. At the very last moment, with the firing squad on standby to execute the Roma, a telegram arrived followed by a phone call that stopped the killings. The Roma thanked the leader of the Balists, Sulj-Otlja, who had intervened to help them.²²⁸

Other survivors, for example, Ashmet M. from Slupchane and Amdi J. from Skopje recounted similar atrocities. Amdi J. remembered a cruel execution outside the borders of North Macedonia, in the Zagreb train station.²²⁹

Few testimonies exist about Roma victims during WWII. Still, we could observe that people shared memories about episodes when being perceived as different from the occupiers meant that they were considered a threat or unwanted in society. The testimonies included in various volumes showed that on the territory of the present day North Macedonia, the Bulgarian, German, Italian, Albanian, and Yugoslav forces considered and treated Roma as an undesirable population.

Greece. Similarly, few documents record the plight of Greek Roma during the Holocaust, and thus, the fate of Greek Roma during WWII still remains an open question. However, the first explicit mention of persecutions suffered by Greek Roma during WWII came at the end of the 1980s. Ioannis Vrissakis, who at the time was the president of the Panhellenic Cultural Association of Greek Roma, narrated his experience from the period of the Occupation to professor Ian Hancock. In 1942, when Vrissakis was fifteen or sixteen years old, he was incarcerated along with his family after a German blockade in the prison of Livadia, where other Roma were held captive:

“Three hundred of us Gypsies, sleeping one on top of each other, eating soup from a huge boiler. Lice? We were alive with lice. We would put our hands under our armpits and bring out ten of them. But we washed ourselves and ate. We did not think we were prisoners, then, but hostages who would be free in a year or two, one day. But every time a German officer got killed, fifty of us were taken out and shot. We were aware of this, it got so [far] that we ceased caring if they killed us then and there, in two days’ time, or a year.”²³⁰

In the 1990s, knowledge about the history of the Greek Roma during WWII was enriched by local research, such as in Dendropotamos, near Thessaloniki. This research included information about a concentration camp in Sindos where Roma families were incarcerated.²³¹

Ioannis Vrissakis with his wife.
© Ian Hancock, private collection



It is also known that after war was declared in October 1940, some local authorities hardened their stance against people cast as “vagrants and beggars.” For example, in March 1941, the City Council of Volos decided for the first time to spend money on the “deportation of vagrants and beggars to their homelands.”²³² The resolution did not provide information about who was considered a “vagrant” or “beggar.” However, it is important that the action was repeated for all the years of the occupation and in 1945, the year after the liberation.²³³

When the Occupation began, Greek society faced an increasing lack of food that escalated into the 1941-1942 famine. Severe food shortages were documented during the whole period of the Occupation and even beyond it, with variations in different geographical regions of Greece.²³⁴ Based on the previous record of the Greek administration, it is reasonable to assume that the Greek Roma faced more difficulties than the rest of the population, but further archival research is necessary to prove our hypothesis that the Roma found themselves out of the welfare network. Still, Roma testimonies support this hypothesis. In his research, Dimitrios Tsakiris repeatedly heard about food scarcities. For example, Apostolos Kalamiotis remembered that “due to the lack of food, we had to leave our hometown and went to Macedonia. Starvation made us eat everything, even bran for animals.”²³⁵ Fotis Tsatsanis also described how, in a Roma settlement in Lamia, “people were falling in front of our tent, and we could not help them. They were dying.”²³⁶

In the testimonies collected by Tsakiris, we found two mentions of Germans demanding that Roma families carry out forced and unpaid jobs. Stella Sereti describes how “[v]ery often, the Germans would come to our camp (...), sometimes they took our men for ‘aggaria’ [unpaid jobs].”²³⁷ Nikolaidis’s testimony also referred to forced labor. The Germans interrogated his family in a camp in central Macedonia, asking whether they had seen guerrillas in the area. During the interrogation, they threatened to kill them. Then, when they realized the family had no information, they ordered them to move to another place and work on the railway.²³⁸

The testimonies collected by Tsakiris further illustrate the precarious position of Roma, especially the itinerant Roma. For women, there was always the danger of being raped by Germans or Italian soldiers.²³⁹ Men and even children were often mistreated and beaten for insignificant reasons, sometimes only for being there, by Germans or Greek collaborators.

Apostolos Kalamiotis recalled an incident in central Macedonia when he was 12 or 13 years old:

“I was repairing a chair, and I had with me my little brother. As soon as they saw us, they stopped the horses, they took me and tied my hands with wire and fastened it to the horse’s tail. When the horse started running, I crawled on the ground, and the wire slipped from my hands, and so I escaped the Germanophiles [Greek collaborators].”²⁴⁰ Indeed, very often, the Greek collaborators were described as being even crueller than the German or Italian forces.

Finally, in the testimonies collected by Tsakiris, there are several mentions of killings. Sophia Anastasiou recounted that Greek collaborators killed two Roma in Piraeus.²⁴¹ Stella Sereti testified that her uncle was killed in central Greece. And there were also two specific mentions of the mass killings of Roma. The first was provided by a non-Roma Greek communist, but unfortunately, his testimony did not offer extensive information on the killings. The second involved the execution of eleven Roma in the neighborhood of Petralona, Athens, on August 4 (or 5), 1944. The execution came as retaliation because a German soldier had been killed a few days earlier by the guerrillas. Most of the executed were members of the Resistance.

There is no doubt that the Greek Roma had an unbearable share in the hardships of the Occupation. However, a critical question is whether their sufferings were due to their low social position and lack of power that deprived them of alliances and networks of safety or the consequences of racism that cast Roma as an inferior people. The testimony of Ioannis Vrissakis and others provided evidence that leads us to believe that the second assumption was the case. During their jail time, Vrissakis’ family was subjected to racist treatment.

As he recalled, “[t]he German SS men would take pieces of brick and scrub our faces to make us look white.” There were also other Roma in the prison, roughly 300, apart from Vrissakis’ family. Many executions happened in this jail: “[e]very time a German officer got killed (by the Resistance), fifty of us were taken outside and shot.”

Finally, they were released at the intervention of a Romanian official.

In 1942, Vrissakis was incarcerated along with his family in the prison of Livadia. After the interrogation, the German officer decided to release them, but a Greek official intervened and convinced him not to do so: “No, these people must be spies because they move about; they are just spies!” The accusation that the Roma, as itinerants, were spies is well known in other countries and became one of the main reasons or justifications for persecuting them.²⁴²

Other testimonies confirmed that in Greece, Roma were incarcerated in at least two camps, whether because they were targeted as spies or because they were considered “asocial.” One camp was in the region of Charilaou in the central-eastern part of the city of Thessaloniki, where as many as sixty Roma families were held.²⁴³ The second was outside Thessaloniki, in Sindos,²⁴⁴ a temporary concentration camp

that operated from the spring of 1943 until the end of that summer. It was not fenced, and the prisoners were not required to wear any distinctive signs, but they were not allowed to leave.

In Didymoteicho, in Thrace, the Roma district was fenced off, allegedly for health reasons. The town was near the border with Turkey, and under German jurisdiction during the Occupation. In July 1943, an epidemic of smallpox erupted. Among the first measures that the German authorities imposed was the blockade of the Roma district. No one could exit or enter the perimeter. In addition, only non-Roma who became ill were put in quarantine in the building of the so-called minority school or tent camps. But Roma were the only ones to be preventively locked away, regardless of whether or not they were sick. This episode is recounted in local articles that published the report of a Greek doctor, Vassileios Chatzipoulidis, who was then working in the Municipality of Evros.²⁴⁵ When the Germans left, he managed to keep some of the photos that the Germans had taken to document the pandemic. One of them shows the entrance to a tent camp exclusively for Roma who were infected; it is the only photo from the period of the Occupation that refers explicitly to the Greek Roma.

The camps of Leivadia, Sindos, Charilaou, and Didymoteicho differed in many ways. However, none of them has been documented adequately to allow us to draw clear conclusions. Yet, one feature is consistently repeated across all cases: the authorities arrested not Greek Roma individuals but entire Roma families or communities. That is different from what happened to other people, except for the situation of the Greek Jews, and it alludes to a racial motivation behind the arrests.

Nevertheless, further research must depart from the point that the Greek Roma experienced arrests and violence during the war due to their identity as Roma. Some sources make it clear that their lives were in constant danger because they were considered inferiors, and they lacked any social capital that would help them escape death.

Albania. Many Albanian sources and official narratives show that the Albanian people took a distinctive stand during WWII by protecting and saving Jewish people from the Holocaust.²⁴⁶ The history of Albania's refusal to implement Nazi measures is mainly based on "Besa,"²⁴⁷ meaning "to keep the promise," a code of honor and cultural practice that Albanians have respected throughout their history. The International Republican Institute argues that "[t]he narrative in which Albanians portray themselves as rescuers of Jews with a high sense of humanity, tolerance, and a long tradition of hospitality is deeply rooted in Albanian society and often used by the political representatives to increase the prestige of the country in the eyes of Albanians as well as foreign actors."²⁴⁸

Knowledge is scarce about the history of the Roma in Albania, including the experience of Albanian Roma during WWII. During the Italian occupation (1939-1943), Albanians created teams of Partisans, which included Roma people, to defend Albania from Germany.²⁴⁹ And a few existing archives and literature suggest that in Albania, no laws, policies, or practices were put in place to deport or exterminate the Roma people during the Holocaust. According to Kovacs, "during the Second World War, when Albania was under Italian rule with the territories of

Greater Albania, Albanian Roma were not persecuted or deported to death camps. (...) there was insufficient time and capacity to pursue a policy of deportation of Roma."²⁵⁰

Roma intellectuals, State representatives, and historians emphasize that Albania did not deport Roma and Jews to Germany or allied countries.²⁵¹ Roma activist Emiliano Aliu noted that "there were concentration camps in Albania during the Second World War, and no Albanian Roma was killed or taken to those places. The Government saved Jews and Roma by sheltering them."²⁵² And the Ombudsman underlined that "as long as the story of the Roma Holocaust has not been written, we don't have any numbers about Roma who were sent to concentration camps. But we all know that Albania protected Jews and Roma by not deporting them to the camps."²⁵³

Some personal Roma family stories and social memories suggest similar conclusions. For example, in an interview, Erion Xhaibra, representative to the State Committee for National Minorities, stated that based on conversations with his grandmother, "there were no deportations of Roma to concentration camps."²⁵⁴

In our archival research in the National Archive and National Public Library, the country-based expert could not find records mentioning mass violence against Roma, labor camps, or deportations of Roma to concentration camps. However, although archival documents point to the ways in which Jewish people were saved,²⁵⁵ we could not identify similar documents related to the fate of Roma. For example, in 1939, the Ministry of Interior ordered the registration of all Jews who lived in Albania as Albanian citizens, aiming to shelter and protect them. In response to this order, the Prefecture of Vlora drafted a list of all Jews who lived in that area. Yet again, it is important to note that the document did not mention Roma.²⁵⁶

Some of the archival documents from the 1920s to the 1950s indicate that before and during WWII, Roma people faced anti-Roma racism/anti-gypsyism in many areas of life. For example, Roma were not welcome or allowed to live in or near towns. Some were moved to peripheral areas, a fact that complicated their listing in municipality registers.²⁵⁷ Others still were evicted, as in the case of an order from October 1942, which supported previous orders of the Prefecture of Berati and required the Commune of Berat to evict the Roma community, labeled as "unwanted elements of society."²⁵⁸

Roma were also victims of governmental discriminatory measures. In 1929, the Ministry of Interior wrote to the prefectures to identify where Roma were settled, and establish their number and their origins in each area, given that Roma were perceived as people who "destroy the morals" of the society.²⁵⁹ In another letter sent from the Municipality of Kavaja to the Ministry of Interior in 1929, the local authority asked: "Please do take stronger measures against Cigan (Jevgj) [labels used for Roma during the Kingdom of Zog] because these elements are very dangerous in every aspect."²⁶⁰ Also, in a 1934 letter sent to the Prefecture of Elbasan, the Ministry of Interior underlined its concern regarding passport control areas, and the first encounter that foreign tourists would have with Albania. The Ministry was particularly concerned with Roma, portrayed as "bad-looking" people, making a poor

impression on visitors to Albania. Therefore, in 1934, the Ministry of Interior issued an order requiring the Prefecture of Elbasan to keep Roma away from the eyes of foreigners.²⁶¹

Roma faced not only evictions and physical segregation but also overt societal rejection and dehumanization. Albanians saw Roma as a serious threat to society, stamped them as “social and moral destroyers,” and dehumanized them as people who could not make their living in a “human way,” constructing a so-called Roma “behavior” that was classified as inappropriate for society. Based on such racist narratives, many requests were made to the authorities. One group of people wrote to the Prime Minister, claiming that “[t]he new generation will be educated learning the non-human behavior of Gabel [offensive term used to describe Roma], their brutal behavior, and that is non-acceptable. We hope that our voice will impress you, that we are demanding the salvation of our customs, our honor, and the education that we have inherited from our grandparents.”²⁶² Others decried socialization with Roma as dangerous for the children, youth, and the society itself,²⁶³ and demanded that authorities consider removing Jevgjit [a derogatory name for Roma people], “because the cohabitation with them, is not only unacceptable in the social and educational framework but dangerous for the new generation.”²⁶⁴ One note of correspondence claimed inappropriate social behavior: “Roma misplaced rubbish in public areas”²⁶⁵ thus scapegoating Roma as transmitters of diseases.

Many of the claims made in the letters allude to behavioral racism. All other correspondence letters demanded Roma’s eviction and segregation. Thus, in Albania, we could not find evidence of Roma as victims of the Holocaust or genocidal policies. But Roma were targeted by anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism during the first half of the 20th century.

Overall, throughout the region, Roma faced different forms of persecution during WWII: genocide and genocidal attempts, war crimes, forced labor, and various manifestations of covert or overt racism, discrimination, and gender and identity-based violence. All of them have been justified by blatant racist narratives about Roma that had been created long before WWII and continue—often with the same intensity—even today.

Acknowledgment, Memory, and History Teaching

Across the world, State institutions and other accountable stakeholders have pushed and pulled various strategies and processes of remembering or forgetting, acknowledging or failing to remember, and silencing the memory of collective injustices, including genocides and other mass atrocities. Securing and retaining public memory and memory sites have often been contingent on political interests and power relations and resources. And therefore, it does not seem striking that reparations programs (e.g., truth-telling, memorialization, apologies, compensations, guarantees of non-repetition, and other reparations mechanisms) for Roma sufferings remain remarkably scarce in the public sphere, as States, wrongdoers, or descendants continue to avoid or lack interest in accountability, reconciliation, and repair.

The post-Holocaust reparations programs have established a standard in reparatory justice processes, leading scholars to conclude that they “have radically changed our understanding of reparations.”²⁶⁶ Yet, the post-Holocaust reparations processes and programs have often neglected Roma, Afro-Germans, and LGBT people, among others.

In SEE, institutions and communities have acknowledged and memorialized the victims of the Holocaust in various ways, from establishing memorial days and places



Ustaša Concentration Camp Jasenovac. Memorial area in Jasenovac, Croatia. Location of the central part of the concentration camp.
© Roma National Council (RNV), David Dragoljub Orlović

of remembrance to national commissions studying the Holocaust, formal and non-formal education, art projects, and commemorative events.

Yet, the losses, pain, and resistance of the Roma victims and survivors of Samuradipen/Porraimos and WWII have not yet been fully documented, embodied in the collective historical consciousness, and unveiled in history textbooks and sites of memory.

History and memory, including processes of forgetting, cannot be disconnected from a society's "patterns of emancipation, persistent marginalization and new hegemonies" because, as Sabine Marschall argues, "memory markers are condensation sites that emerge from a complex nexus between the political will of hegemonic forces within society and the uneasy compromises forced upon those in power for the sake of democracy and societal stability."²⁶⁷ Furthermore, in the SEE region, the non-remembrance and amnesia of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in the collective and social memory, historical consciousness, and history are also tied to a long-held colonial narrative of Roma "as a people without history or a people who are not interested in their past and only live in the present."²⁶⁸

The issues of reparations, and specifically truth-telling and memory, are complex and broad, but in this regional study, we focused primarily on symbolic reparations: normative acknowledgment and *lieux de mémoire* [sites of memory]. One of the central research questions of our endeavor involved the processes and sites of acknowledgment, memorialization, commemoration, and teaching of Samuradipen/Porraimos and other injustices during WWII as core elements of national histories and collective and social memory in the countries studied. We particularly followed Pierre Nora's argument that memory "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects."²⁶⁹ Thus, we probed how and if States, civil society, and leaders purposely created material, symbolic, and functional *lieux de mémoire*, understanding that "there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills."²⁷⁰

4.1. Acknowledgment

The normative or conventional acknowledgment of Samuradipen/Porraimos memorial days has been one of the most concrete and visible forms of evidence of political will and intention to remember the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide taken by several States in SEE. States like Serbia have prioritized memorial days with significance at the national level, but frequently, August 2²⁷¹ has been recognized as a shared day of commemoration across the region, and broadly at the European and global levels.

In the European Union, in 2015 the European Parliament put forward a formal acknowledgment of August 2 as the European Memorial Day of the Samuradipen/Porraimos. An EP resolution entitled *International Roma Day - anti-Gypsyism in*

Europe and EU Recognition of the Memorial Day of the Roma Genocide during WW II declared “that a European day should be dedicated to commemorating the victims of the genocide of the Roma during World War II and that this day should be called the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.”²⁷²

The 2015 EP resolution has had a particular impact on acknowledgment, prompting national institutions across SEE (and beyond) to observe August 2 as a day of commemoration of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. For example, the Romanian Presidency began to observe August 2 and issued press statements in 2015. Similarly, State institutions in Montenegro also started to observe August 2 as a commemorative day. However, Montenegro has not ensured normative acknowledgment; instead, the practice of acknowledgment has functioned as a protoco-lar decision of the Government. For example, in 2020, when it was first observed, Samuradipen/Porrajmos was modestly commemorated at the State level with a dona-tion of books to the National Library of Montenegro. Still, in 2021, Montenegro’s “Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights – Directorate for Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, in cooperation with the Montenegrin National Theatre, organized an event on 29 July 2021, to mark 2 August as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.”²⁷³ In 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted August 2 as Suffering of Roma during Holocaust Remembrance Day.²⁷⁴

North Macedonia also observes August 2, according to a 2022 OSCE report. “The official commemoration was established in 2017 and pays respect to and remem-bers the victims of the Roma and Sinti genocide. Activities are held at the Holocaust Memorial Center, with the Head of State, officials from the Presidency and govern-mental level, and members of Parliament in attendance. Moreover, the diplomatic corps, members of academia, students, civil society organizations, and the media attend these events” the report remarks.²⁷⁵

Similarly, in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Kosovo*, there is no normative ac-knowledgment of August 2 or another significant national date regarding the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide or the Roma plight during WWII in the specific coun-try. Yet, sometimes, the victims of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide are men-tioned on January 27 or other national or international commemorative days. Such is the case in Bulgaria, which “commemorates the Holocaust on 10 March, the Day of the Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews and the Victims of the Holocaust and of the Crimes against Humanity, which serves as a memorial day for Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the Roma and Sinti genocide and all other victims of National Socialism, as well as other genocides and crimes against humanity.”²⁷⁶

Several countries had adopted legislation or taken other formal steps to observe Samuradipen/Porrajmos and mark August 2 or specific national remembrance days before the EP Resolution. In Romania, before and after the above-mentioned Presidency statements, other national institutions took several relevant and distinct steps. In October 2003, the government appointed an International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, which issued a report in 2004 that included a chapter on Roma.²⁷⁷ In 2005, the Romanian Parliament adopted a law which pro-hibits fascist organizations, symbols, and Holocaust denial in public spaces.²⁷⁸ In 2007, President Traian Băsescu issued an official apology and decorated a few Roma survivors.²⁷⁹ But it was only in 2020 that the Parliament adopted a law recognizing

August 2 as the National Commemoration Day for the Holocaust against the Roma - Samudaripen.²⁸⁰ However, State institutions have not adopted a distinct memorial day marking the specific suffering of Romanian Roma in Transnistria.

The Croatian Parliament proclaimed August 2 as the International Roma Victims of Porajmos/Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2014, after members of the Roma National Council sent a letter to the Parliament, asking the Legislative to recognize the International Roma Victims or Porajmos/Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Roma National Council argued that after WWII, "Roma victims were forgotten and strictly marginalized in the processes of commemorating victims of the Second World War, in historiography, educational programs, and textbooks, and Roma victims are only mentioned in passing when listing casualty nations of the Second World War."²⁸¹

However, in Croatia, two further developments can be noted. First, in 2017, MP Veljko Kajtazi initiated an amendment to the 2014 provision, replacing the syntagm "Porajmos/Holocaust" with "Samudaripen/genocide during the Second World War." The change was adopted in March 2017. While elaborating the proposition to substitute the term "Holocaust" with "genocide", Kajtazi stated that the "Holocaust or [*Speaker is not understood clearly*] are terms that are predominantly used for the sufferings of Jewish people during the Second World War."²⁸² And second, although the Croatian Parliament adopted that parliamentary decision to commemorate August 2 as a memorial day, leaders and academics point to the need to also specifically acknowledge and remember the genocide and atrocities committed by NDH during WWII. Thus, while August 2 honors all the Roma victims, no memorial day yet exists to commemorate the Croatian Roma victims, as for example in Serbia on December 16. Roma activists like Lule Nikolić emphasize that "it would be even more important, especially for the Roma people in Croatia and for the Republic of Croatia, to commemorate the Roma victims of the genocide in the Republic of Croatia on May 19, when the mechanism of the Ustaša genocide against the Roma was launched in 1942."²⁸³

Serbia had taken steps towards the normative acknowledgment of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide before 2015 but also focused on memorial days with significance for the Serbian Roma. In 2007, Serbia adopted December 16 as the Day of Remembrance of the Roma Victims of WWII. And since 2011, State representatives, members of Roma communities, and others gather every December 16 at the extermination site of Jabuka, near the city of Pančevo, where many Roma were shot in 1941, to commemorate the Roma victims. Often, Roma victims are also mentioned in other official commemorations organized to mark the International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27) or the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Other Victims of Fascism during the Second World War (April 22), a ceremony which is usually organized at the site of the Sajmište concentration camp. Thus, Serbia serves as an example of best practices by honoring the victims of the Holocaust, both in specific and shared ceremonies.

Slovenia has taken a more *all-in* approach. The State officially recognized January 27 as Holocaust Memorial Day on February 22, 2008. The ceremonies organized to mark that Memorial Day also recognize and honor the memory of the Roma victims. But there have been requests and initiatives to also acknowledge August 2

as an official “European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day/International Holocaust Remembrance Day.” For instance, in 2019, the Roma Association of Slovenia, along with Vera Klopčič, Member of the Slovene National Delegation at the IHRA and an Honorary Member of the Roma Association of Slovenia, submitted a proposal to the government to declare August 2 as a Memorial Day at the IHRA’s Slovenian national delegation meeting.²⁸⁴

Typically, Roma NGOs have led and organized the commemorative events of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, which occasionally included representatives of various State institutions. For example, in Greece, there is no decree ensuring the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide or the suffering of the Greek Roma during WWII. Yet, since 2018, as a result of the work of Ellan Passe, a confederation of Greek Roma organizations, commemorative events have taken place at the national level on August 2. Also, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although the State institutions do not organize an official commemoration of the Roma victims, the current Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees awards mini-grants to Roma organizations to mark important dates.²⁸⁵

Sometimes, current political and social arrangements and factors also impact the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide commemoration. For instance, the Republika Srpska authorities support and organize an annual memorial service²⁸⁶ at Donja Gradina for the Serb, Jewish, and Roma victims of WWII. Although the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Ustaša Crimes - Genocide in Jasenovac Concentration Camp and its Largest Execution Site in Donja Gradina nominally commemorates the Roma victims, representatives of the Roma communities from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina are often excluded from the protocols and speeches. In the past, the organizing institutions have invited representatives of the World Roma Organization. However, when Roma organizations from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina solicited to be represented at such commemorative events, some of them were rejected based on their residence in the Federation. Furthermore, activists also pointed out that organizations from Republika Srpska were also removed from the agenda on the day of the memorial service.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, in North Macedonia, the day of commemoration of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide coincides with the national holiday Ilinden, which casts a shadow over the Roma commemorative events. For the past few years, civil society organizations decided to organize the commemorative events of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide after August 2 to maintain the public’s attention to this significant commemoration.

Thus, the normative or conventional acknowledgment of August 2 and other WWII-related dates with symbolic meaning in the Roma history has constituted one of the leading tools in a modest repertoire of symbolic *lieux de mémoire* aiming to install “the duty of remembrance” of the Roma victims of the Samudaripen/Porrajmos.

However, at the national level, we can sometimes observe a clash of memory between August 2, as a shared European memorial day of the Roma suffering during the Holocaust, and the acknowledgment of the history of the Roma during WWII within specific countries. There is a growing concern, especially within civil society, regarding the risk of forgetting or avoiding addressing or remembering the local atrocities perpetrated against Roma. Whereas Croatian Roma find it appropriate to

also add a distinct memorial day for the Roma victims of Jasenovac and other camps in Croatia, countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro have yet to acknowledge at the normative level a memorial day marking the Roma suffering or resistance during WWII within those countries.

Monuments and other physical sites of memory promise permanence of what and how we remember, primarily in present-day societies, characterized by “the fleeting image on the screen and the immateriality of communications.”²⁸⁸ Memorials have both reflective and educational purposes.²⁸⁹ In the past few decades, such sites of memory - monuments, plaques, graves, building names - dedicated to or inclusive of the Roma victims of the Holocaust or Roma heroes of WWII have been erected in capital cities or/and historically meaningful areas.

4.2. Memorials

In SEE countries, establishing places of memory for Roma history has generally only gained interest in the last few decades. Still, there are also notable exceptions, especially in some of the former Yugoslav countries, where monuments were also built during communism, including in areas documented for massacres of the Roma. For instance, in Serbia, most monuments preceded the construction of other significant monuments in Europe, such as the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism unveiled in 2012 in Berlin. In 1995, a monument by sculptor Popović and a plaque were erected in Sajmište, not far from the center of Belgrade. The monument commemorates Roma victims, together with Serbs, Jews, and anti-fascists. In addition, in 2007, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia assembled plaques on the land of the Topovske Šupe camp,²⁹⁰ and in the city of Belgrade, where Roma are mentioned as victims of the camps along with Jewish victims. Also, a short distance away from Topovske Šupe, another plaque commemorates the Roma killed by the Nazis; however, the place where the plaque is located is currently inaccessible due to problems relating to the ownership of the property.²⁹¹ There are several important monuments in other towns and cities, such as the monument built in Leskovac in 1973 or the Crystal Flower Monument in Kragujevac, which was built in 1968 inside the memorial park to commemorate the victims of the October 1941 massacre. The monument is dedicated to the young Roma shot there.²⁹² However, of the four concentration camps that existed in Belgrade during WWII, only the Banjica camp was memorialized through the construction of a museum, while Sajmište, Topovske Šupe, Milišićeva ciglana are still not adequately memorialized today.

Several monuments were built in ex-Yugoslavian countries during communism, but these sites of memory would not always specify the victims' ethnicity, using instead general abstract terms like “innocent citizens” to describe the victims. This is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there are a some memorials dedicated to the Roma victims of WWII.

In the village of Žeravica, Gradiška, the Association of Partisan Veterans of Gradiška established a small memorial which specifically mentions and is dedicated to the 611 Roma victims fallen during WWII. The plaque reads: "I, the eternal stone symbol, remind you dear visitor of the 611 gypsies who fell victim to fascist terror during the great liberation war of 1941-1945."²⁹³ An additional plaque was added to the monument compound to commemorate four Roma members of the Bosnian Serb Army killed in the 1992-1995 war.²⁹⁴

Furthermore, there is a memorial in Gornje Poljice, in Lukavac, near Tuzla,²⁹⁵ which does not specifically mention the Roma victims but was erected in a primarily Roma neighborhood, where Roma were massacred during the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. The memorial, named Monument to Victims of Fascist Terror 1941-45, Gornje Poljice, was built in the 1980s and has been poorly maintained. One of the plaques reads: "Innocents who fell, future generations will never forget you."²⁹⁶ The central facet of the memorial is the Mother Breastfeeding a Child²⁹⁷ - statue; however, it was looted in the early post-1995 period.

Other memorials that include Roma victims without specifying their ethnic identity are those in Podgrmeč - Šušnjari, near Sanski Most, and the memorial in Kruščica near Vitez, both poorly maintained.²⁹⁸ The Šušnjari Memorial Complex was built in the 1970s, devastated during the 1992-1995 war, and neglected in the post-1995 period. The memorial commemorates the people massacred in Podgrmeč in 1941 by the Ustaša forces, who were Serbs, Jews, and Roma. And the Kruščica memorial represented the infamous Black house (*Crna kuća*), which was the site of detention of Serbs, Jews, and Roma. An exhibition inside the facility was devastated and looted during the 1992-1995 war. In both cases, there is no official plaque mentioning the Roma victims since the terminology generally used during the communist era in the Yugoslavian space was rather general and abstract, such as "innocent citizens."

In Sarajevo, according to the Institute for the Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Canton Sarajevo, there are no recorded monuments commemorating Roma victims.²⁹⁹ But names of a handful of Sarajevo's Roma are revealed among the 11,000 victims of WWII in the Vraca Memorial Park. However, in accordance with socialist ideology, all these victims are mentioned as victims of "fascist terror," without any specified ethnicity.

More recently, *lieux de mémoire* of the Samudaripen/Porrajmos or WWII have also been instituted in other SEE countries. In Slovenia, several interviewees mentioned the Sinti Memorial in Begunje,³⁰⁰ in the garden of the Hostages' Museum, and the memorial plaque in Murska Sobota.

Enisa Brizani,³⁰¹ the former editor of the radio show *Amaro Drom* and a member of the Roma academic club, reported that the memorial plaque at the Romani Museum in Murska Sobota was established by the Roma Association. Also, there is a *lieu de mémoire*



Monument at the Museum of Hostages, Begunje na Gorenjskem, Slovenia. "In memoriam of the Sinti victims of the Nazi genocide 1941-1945". © Alenka Janko Spreizer

in Turnišče, at the cemetery, in a place where Hungarian occupiers killed six Roma hostages. It includes a grave and a plaque which mentions the two Roma. It does not state that they were buried as victims of WWII. Furthermore, some members of the Slovenian IHRA delegation have been active in establishing the *Stolpersteine/Stumbling blocks*, a European art project by Gunter Demnig, which would commemorate the Sinti and Roma in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, amongst other victims of National Socialism.³⁰²



The Wheel of the Roma, Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust – Bucharest, Romania.
© Matei Demetrescu

In Romania, there are a few monuments and other sites of memory linked to the memory of the Holocaust that serve as gathering places to pay respect to the Roma victims or as venues of choice to organize commemorative events. In 2009, a Holocaust Memorial was inaugurated in Bucharest for the Roma and Jewish victims.

In contrast, the Northern Transylvanian Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened in 2015 in Șimleul Silvaniei, primarily commemorates the Jewish victims. In 2013, Roma activists also established the basis of a Museum of Roma Culture in Bucharest.³⁰³ The Museum is now closed, but it hosted several events intended to raise awareness about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, which culminated in August 2015 with the inauguration of a Roma Holocaust Monument (which was also removed from the site).³⁰⁴

Recently, other local initiatives involved erecting monuments commemorating the Roma who were deported from Barcea commune (Galați county)³⁰⁵ and Pojorâta village (Argeș county) who served in the Romanian Army and fell in combat during WWII.³⁰⁶

In Croatia, as Lule Nikolić argues, “the central place of remembrance is the Jasenovac Memorial Site.”³⁰⁷ In 2020, in the village of Uštica, location of a camp that was part of the Ustaša concentration camp Jasenovac system during WWII, the Roma Memorial Site Uštica was opened with the support of the city of Zagreb. Lule Nikolić and other activists see it as “an important and positive step that has enabled the process of commemorating the Roma victims of the genocide to take center stage.” But the design and the commemorative strategy of this memorial site have also received some criticism because some Roma politicians carved their names on the monument. “I hope that the issue of organizing and operating this memorial center will be regulated by law and that we will get a public institution that will not be dependent on any organization or politician, and in which it will not be possible for a Roma politician to put his name for political promotion on a monument dedicated to genocide victims. Such behavior casts a shadow over the entire project,” stated Lule Nikolić.³⁰⁸

So far, we could not find information about the existence of memorials of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide or other WWII atrocities and injustices perpetrated against Roma in Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo*, Montenegro, or North Macedonia. For

example, in North Macedonia, there is no distinct Roma memorial dedicated to the victims of WWII, and sometimes, Roma have organized commemorative events for August 2 at the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia or other similar places. Also, in recent years, Roma NGOs and politicians have made several unsuccessful efforts to establish a Holocaust memorial for Roma in Shuto Orizari, one of Skopje's municipalities, where Roma represent the majority of the population. Furthermore, in Kosovo,* there is no monument dedicated to Roma victims or their resistance during WWII, but a few Roma Partisans are remembered by Roma organizations. For example, a Roma cultural society and a school in Prizren have been named after Durmish Aslano, a Roma Partisan in the anti-fascist resistance from Prizren.

In other countries, there are several sites of commemoration and remembrance of Roma Partisans and heroes of Resistance movements. In Albania, in 2019, Roma Versitas Albania, a Roma non-governmental organization, erected a memorial mural illustrating the Roma resistance in the city of Tirana. In 2020, an explanatory plaque was added to the memorial. This is the only Roma memorial that exists in Albania in the framework of WWII. Nevertheless, in an interview with Emiliano Aliu, Roma activist and the Executive Director of the Roma NGO Roma Versitas, he stated that:

“In an initiative with the youth of Barvalipe School, we aimed to build a memorial to mark the Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day. We identified a location, which was canceled immediately after the inhabitants of the building in which the memorial was supposed to be painted, learned that the memorial belongs to the Roma community, even though we had the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Tirana to erect it.”³⁰⁹

In Montenegro, the place Šabov brijeg (Šabo's Hill) near Berane is named after Šabo Selimović, a Roma Partisan courier shot by the occupier forces. Similarly, SUBNOR - the Alliance of Veteran Associations of the People's Liberation War, Podgorica erected a memorial plaque honoring Uka and Salko Sejđović from Podgorica, Roma who were shot by Četniks for their involvement in the Partisan movement. They are commemorated as fallen fighters in the National Liberation War. Moreover, Mahmut Salkanović, a Roma member of the Partisan units, has a dedicated monument near the “Boris Kidrić” Ironworks in Nikšić. He was praised for his courage in helping 25 Montenegrins escape from the Italian camp in Nikšić, where they were held hostage.

In Greece, there are several monuments that honor or are related to the participation of Roma in the Resistance. In 1985, a monument was erected in Tavros, a working-class neighborhood between Athens and Piraeus.

Similar to some of the monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this monument does not specify ethnic identities but is dedicated to eleven men executed by the German forces on August 4, 1944. On that day, the German forces encircled the Roma neighborhood of the Chamosterna area, inhabited mostly by refugees from Asia Minor. The names of the eleven men are also inscribed on the monument of Tavros. Their occupations, as well as their affiliations with Resistance organizations, are not mentioned on the monument but have been documented with the support of the Menelaos

Charalambidis database.³¹⁰ There are two more inscriptions engraved on the monument: "Honor and Glory to the Heroic Dead executed by the Germans on August 4" and "We continue your struggle. Municipality of Tavros." Although the memorial does not refer to the victims' identity as Roma, it pays respect to them as fighters in the Resistance. Yet, the event of the Roma execution in Petralona has been widely known in the public sphere, and thus, it is safe to suggest that the municipality knew about the background of the victims when it decided to erect the monument. Furthermore, most of the articles that refer to the monument, or the related historical events, mention the Roma identity of the deceased people as well.³¹¹

Another memorial is located in the 3rd Cemetery of Athens, a cemetery that contains the remains of the majority of the victims executed during the German occupation. It is an ossuary in the form of a simple grave.

The inscription writes: "Here are laying the bones of Athigganoi, executed by the Germans on August 5, 1944."

There is no context given of the events that led to the execution of the mentioned persons, nor the place where the atrocities happened. However, the inscription mentions their identity as Roma (Athigganoi). The blockade of Tavros happened on August 4, 1944, and the ossuary at the 3rd Cemetery of Athens mentions that the Roma were executed on August 5, same year. Thus, the monument may honor people executed during the same blockade. However, the plaque does not mention specific names.

The third monument is placed outside Athens, in the rural area of South Evoia. It was erected in honor of a battle between the ELAS (the armed branch of the left-wing National Liberation Front - EAM resistance organization) and the German forces on September 3, 1944. The monument has the form of a memorial complex containing the bust of the only fallen ELAS fighter in that battle. An inscription informs the public that the name of the fighter was Vassilis Mitrou or "The Gypsy." Another plate behind the bust elaborates: "Honor and Glory to the ELAS' fighter Vassilis (Tolis) Mitrou, the Gypsy who fell heroically during the battle of Lamboussa." According to several sites, Vassilis Mitrou was a captain of the guerilla army of the ELAS and a Roma from the town of Kymi in Evoia. The information which can be found about him refers mainly to his life as a member of the Resistance.³¹²

Thus, there are merely a few sites of memory for Roma victims and heroes across the region, which occasionally have been damaged, shadowed by, or competed with counter-narratives and symbols that glorify war criminals and Nazis.³¹³ These memorial spaces have a "dialogical quality" to connect the past and the present. But as Sabine Marschall argues, such sites of memory "do not have an integral capacity to preserve memory for the future; the transgenerational transfer of memory always relies on active processes of remembrance, such as purposeful visitation, commemorative functions and symbolic rituals."³¹⁴ Particularly for the post-Holocaust generations, as Huyssen concludes, monuments can trigger a mimetic approximation,³¹⁵ but only if tied to "other related discourses operating in the mind of the spectator and in the public sphere."³¹⁶ Thus, in the processes of memory, the monuments and other physical sites of memory can be kept alive and strengthened through various activities and discourses, including commemorative ceremonies and history teaching.

4.3. Commemorative Ceremonies

Across SEE, Roma civil society organizations and scholars have been key leaders in writing and revitalizing Roma history during WWII, advocating to create the above-discussed permanent sites of memory and organizing commemorative events. Most often, the Roma leaders and their allies have interwoven the existing sites of memory with remembrance events, aiming for mimetic approximation. For example, in Croatia, such initiatives have been led by Roma NGOs, as Lule Nikolić recounts:

“The issue of historical research and remembrance of Roma victims of genocide was opened within the Roma National Council (RNV) by our Executive Director David Dragoljub Orlović. Since its founding in 2012, RNV has made it a priority. We initiated and co-organized the first commemoration at the Roma Cemetery Uštica in Jasenovac in 2012 and, over the next two years, made that commemoration significant and socially accepted. At RNV, we created a special logo in the shape of a Roma wheel made of barbed wire as a visual symbol of Porajmos. We initiated and, in cooperation with the Government, organized the first international conference on genocide against Roma, held during the presidency of the Republic of Croatia in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. We co-financed a research and publishing project in which Bibijana Papo, the coordinator, also participated, and which resulted in finding numerous documents on the genocide of Roma in the archives of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. The results of the research - extremely important documents on the genocide of the Roma were published in the book *The Suffering of the Roma in the Independent State of Croatia in 1941-1945*, which RNV published in collaboration with the Institute of Social Sciences ‘Ivo Pilar’ in Zagreb. RNV organized several exhibitions and other activities to present the truth about the genocide against the Roma and inform the public about the consequences of the genocide.”³¹⁷

Similarly, in Greece, in 2018, the Roma confederation Ellan Passe organized the first official commemoration of the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (August 2) at the national level.

Before 2018, local memorial services had been held in Greece, though it is undocumented when they took place for the first time or whether they were organized on an annual base. Ellan Passe also planned a Samudaripen/Porrajmos commemoration in 2020, in cooperation with the Regional Administration of Attiki. The event with the bilingual title *Always have in mind not to forget/ Dik Tena Bistre* was scheduled for September 6 at Akadimia Platonos, an open archaeological site in the Kolonos district and a neighborhood with a significant Roma population.³¹⁸ Although the Ministry of Culture endorsed and issued a special permit for the event, due to the expansion of the coronavirus pandemic, stricter regulations were imposed regarding mass gatherings, and the event had to be canceled. In 2021, the commemorations were also very modest due to the same reasons.

Across the region, specific remembrance events for the Roma victims have not received the same attention from high-level politicians as other Holocaust commemorative events, but the awareness about the Samudaripen/Porraimos is growing. For example, in Croatia, high government officials have typically participated in commemorations of the genocides on Roma, Serbs, and Jews on April 22, at the Jasenovac Memorial Site. However, only middle-level officials of the Republic of Croatia have participated in the August 2 commemorative events of the Samudaripen/Porraimos organized by Roma NGOs since 2012.

Often, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide commemorative ceremonies are organized in capital cities, with little focus on the local communities. But recently, ceremonies that involve local Roma and non-Roma communities, and local authorities have also been expanded. Such is the case of the 2019 local commemorative events organized at Kato Achaia in Peloponnese, and at Sofades in Central Greece, Thessaly.³¹⁹ Similarly, in Serbia, the victims have been commemorated locally in Novi Sad, every January, during the official commemoration of the victims of the Raid that took place in January 1942 in Novi Sad and the surrounding villages, when the Serbs, Jews, and the Roma were victims of the Hungarian repression; in Leskovac, where the Municipality organizes annual commemorations of the Roma victims of the shooting of December 11, 1941, in Šabac, Kragujevac, and other cities. Furthermore, in Craiova, Romania, a commemorative ceremony was hosted on August 2, 2021, by the regional Dolj branch of the Roma Party, in cooperation with several Roma NGOs. This event brought together State officials, Roma NGO representatives from Romania and abroad, as well as members of the local Roma community. The ceremony included a succession of events, ranging from round-table debates and a debut for a new publication about the Holocaust to highly ritualized gestures, such as listening to Roma survivors from Craiova sharing their dramatic wartime stories and throwing flowers in the water of a local lake in pious homage to Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide victims.³²⁰ Iulian Paraschiv, the President of the National Agency for Roma, attended that event and highlighted its importance: "These events are really welcomed because they help keep the memory [of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide] alive. A number of [local Roma] survivors attended the event; this made me pay close attention and, at the same time, helped me realize the importance of organizing such events."³²¹

Kosovar* and Serbian Roma leaders brought the ceremonies to the streets. In 2021, Roma human rights organizations joined an ERIAC regional campaign, *Proud Roma Free Europe*, which raised awareness about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide.

For example, the commemoration in the public space in downtown Priština took place under the slogan "Roma Remember;" and billboards in Albanian and Serbian were placed in Priština and Gračanica. The billboard portrayed Roma heroes, survivors, and resistance fighters through an exhibition in the main square in Priština. Part of the campaign was the collection of signatures for a petition to commemorate August 2, at the State level.³²² The campaign also supported the steady work of Roma intellectuals, such as Kujtim Paçaku, who have long advocated for recognition and memorialization of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide.³²³

Thus, memory activism remains a crucial pillar for the Roma NGOs in the region. The commemoration of August 2, as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, or

other historically meaningful dates are recent developments in some SEE countries. And most often, Roma organizations, which often struggle with limited financial and organizational capacity, lead the efforts. And even though State institutions rarely lead commemorative events for the Roma victims of the Holocaust or WWII, a trend of State representatives (although not always high-level) participating in or co-sponsoring such events is visible. However, there is a crucial need to ensure awareness and truth-telling about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and the Roma history during WWII in SEE in a more formalized, substantive, and sustainable manner.

4.4. **History Teaching**

In many countries across the world, dominant historical narratives overshadow, distort, or discount that country's own history of oppression against marginalized groups. Often, history teaching reflects this pattern, and furthermore, it "ignores or carries, validates or strengthens stereotypes about marginalized groups, especially minorities and indigenous peoples, in addition to women and the poor."³²⁴ The history of Roma, including during the Holocaust and WWII, fits into such a pattern of exclusion.

In 2020, the Council of Europe published a study entitled *The Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbook*, which raised concerns regarding the representation of Roma in textbooks and curricula in 21 CoE member states, comprising some of the countries included in this regional study.³²⁵ To support the member states in addressing the gaps and concerns, the same year, CoE's Committee of Ministers adopted *CM Recommendation (2020) 2 The Inclusion of the History of Roma and/or Travelers in School Curricula and Teaching Materials*.³²⁶ The Recommendation has called on governments to integrate activities related to the remembrance of the Roma Holocaust into formal and non-formal education, in connection with the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (August 2) or other relevant dates to the historical context of the country concerned, such as local anniversaries connected with the imprisonment or deportation of Roma to concentration camps.

The official historical and memorial narratives endorsed by the States in schools omit or insufficiently address the place and the role of Roma in the national histories. As history teaching impacts collective memory, interethnic relationships (e.g., biases and interpersonal racism), community building, social cohesion, the sense of belonging, and critical thinking, this phenomenon remains concerning from atrocity prevention and human rights perspectives.

Across the region, distortion, minimization, and omission of historical facts regarding Roma in history textbooks and classes are still rampant. In North Macedonia, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is scarcely represented in the educational system. Of 19 textbooks analyzed in the CoE study from 2020, only eight mention Roma. There are no Roma-specific chapters in the history textbooks.³²⁷ Moreover, in the North Macedonian history textbooks, Roma are mentioned only six times in relation

to the Holocaust and are usually listed as one of the victim categories of the Nazi regime without providing additional information about how and what happened to Roma in North Macedonia during WWII. For example, a textbook for the 9th grade, which includes a chapter on the Holocaust, explains:

“The German National Socialists who came to power in Germany in January 1933 believed that the Germans were a superior race, and that Jews, Roma, and Slavic nations were inferior races and that they did not deserve to live. At the time of the Holocaust, the groups targeted by the Nazis because of their inferiority were: Poles, Russians, Slovaks, etc. [...] Although the Jews were the primary victims of Nazism, the Holocaust claimed many other victims, including tens of thousands of Roma. They were forced into labor and massacred, not only by the Nazis but by many of their associates. They were deported to extermination camps in Auschwitz, Birkenau, Chelmo, Belzec, Treblinka and others. About 5 thousand Roma were killed in the concentration camp Jasenovac.”³²⁸

In Bulgaria, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is not included in the history textbooks for students from grades 5 to 11. Of 76 textbooks analyzed in the mentioned CoE study (27 “History and Civilization” textbooks, 29 “Geography and Economics” textbooks, and 20 textbooks in a range of other different subjects), only 16 mention Roma as an ethnic group or national minority. And only one textbook mentioned the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in general, but it did not discuss the Roma persecution and racism during WWII in Bulgaria.³²⁹

In Albania, Roma are not mentioned in history, social sciences, or geography curricula. Yet, in the history textbooks from grades 5 to 12, there is one chapter that describes the WWII, the Nazi regime, and the history of the Holocaust. In the history textbooks used until 2015, only Jewish victims had been included. In 2015, Roma were added to the list of Nazi victims. Even though Roma, along with people with disabilities, have been added to the victim categories, no descriptions, explanations, or details about the number of Roma victims or of the circumstances in which they perished in concentration camps were included. The history textbook paragraph reads as follows: “[i]n the name of ethnic purity, the Nazi government physically eliminated and locked up in concentration camps, Jewish people, people with disabilities, and Roma.” Furthermore, most Albanian educational institutions do not prioritize the history of the Holocaust, nor the inclusion and representation of Roma and their persecution and genocide during the Holocaust in textbooks.³³⁰

The fate of Albanian Roma during WWII is not a research and teaching priority either. Most often, the institutions that provide information about the Holocaust and the Albanian Roma history during WWII are civil society organizations. Some State representatives expect Roma leaders to lead and ensure awareness about Roma history: “The [history of the] Holocaust in Albania is known in the framework of saving the Jews. There is so much work to be done to add Roma. We are interested in promoting it, but a lot of work should be done by civil society and interested groups.”³³¹

In Kosovo*, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, including the history of the Roma, has not been part of the school curricula, and the silence around it pervades

the school syllabi. Roma communities are mentioned in the history curriculum in Kosovo*, however not related to the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide but in relation to demographics, national or ethnic minorities, or the ethnic composition of Kosovo*.³³² Generally, Roma representation in the history curriculum does not use derogatory language. But as an assessment report from 2017 revealed, the history textbook for the grade 11 of the general high schools referred to Roma as gypsies.³³³

In Kosovo*, similar to Albania and other countries, civil society organizations have led initiatives focusing on the development of history materials and awareness. The MESTI of Kosovo*, the Kosovo* History Teachers Association, and forumZFD have worked for several years towards improving the Holocaust education in Kosovo*. They organized a series of workshops and established collaborations with Yad Vashem, the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin, New Perspektiva, the Haus der Wannseekonferenz in Berlin, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. A handbook on teaching the Holocaust was developed, aiming to promote multiperspectivity in history teaching.³³⁴ The handbook has incorporated Roma in the Holocaust narration and refers to the Roma as victims of the Holocaust in SEE, including Kosovo*. It also includes examples of Roma resistance against the Nazis. Such is the case of the Roma woman, Hajrija Imeri-Mihajlić, the only Roma woman awarded the title of the *Righteous Among the Nations* by Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center for the care of a one-year-old child of a mother who was forced to flee and escape the Nazis leaving the child behind.³³⁵ This is an important first step toward the inclusion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in history materials.

In Montenegro, the approved textbooks that are currently used in the educational system mention Roma's suffering only in the context of the fate of all the people taken to concentration camps. Pupils in Montenegro learn about Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide at the European level, as well as Roma being killed alongside others in camps like Jasenovac. But they do not learn about the history of Montenegrin Roma during WWII. The period of WWII is taught in the 9th grade of the primary school and the 4th grade of high school (gymnasium) as well as the 1st or 2nd grade of so-called mixed secondary schools. None of the textbooks analyzed in several studies³³⁶ contained information about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide specific to Montenegro.

History textbooks in Montenegro do not offer details on the Roma Holocaust. The Council of Europe's Handbook on Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide does not elaborate on Montenegro in detail either. Roma are usually mentioned along with all other minority groups who were persecuted in the name of "racial purity." The most common knowledge shared with students is that the Roma population, just like other minorities that were considered "impure," were subjected to arbitrary internment, forced labor, and mass murder.

In Serbia, the topic of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is rarely mentioned in school textbooks; Roma history, culture, and language are similarly absent in the Serbian school system.³³⁷ In the 2020 CoE study, Serbia is listed among the countries that do not mention Roma in their curricula at all;³³⁸ however, of the 61 school texts taken into consideration, only 19 contain references to Roma.³³⁹

On the other hand, in recent years, similar to other countries, civil society organizations from Serbia have striven to bring the topic of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide into the schools through teacher training courses, seminars,³⁴⁰ and educational materials. These efforts included publishing educational materials in Serbian, Romani, and English in 2018 by a consortium of NGOs entitled *Do you know who I am? Educational materials about the genocide against the Roma during the Second World War and antigypsyism in Serbia*.³⁴¹ The materials, available online, are a collection of eight workshops (four on the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and four on antigypsyism) based on Yad Vashem's pedagogy and designed for elementary and high school teachers. The materials can be used in class. To date, there are no statistics on their practical use and efficiency.

Another noteworthy initiative refers to the educational materials produced in 2018 by a team of experts who cooperated with the Anne Frank House and various Serbian ministries, and received support from the OSCE-ODIHR. The materials were developed for high school students with the goal of teaching young people to recognize and confront antisemitism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination. Some of the materials address the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism today. The Director of the Institute for Improvement of Education of the Republic of Serbia approved the publishing and use of these auxiliary teaching materials in Serbian schools through the Decision No. 1639-3/2018, from October 15, 2018.³⁴² Unfortunately, although this is a State coordinated initiative, there are no statistics on the use of these materials. Also, one of the main problems in dealing with topics such as Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism is the attitude of teachers who reproduce discriminatory stereotypes toward Roma or are not interested in the issue at all.³⁴³

In Slovenia, Boris Hajdinjak, a history teacher and Director of The Maribor Synagogue, claimed that he did not find information about the Samudaripen/Porrajmos in the history textbooks, neither in the chapters concerning the universal history, nor in the chapters on Slovenian history. The textbooks regarding the history of Slovenia contain references such as "6 million Jews, Auschwitz, there is a map in a textbook of one publishing house." But as Boris Hajdinjak underlines, the textbooks do not mention the atrocities perpetrated in Slovenia.³⁴⁴ A new book for the history class in the 4th year in gymnasium *History 4: Contemporariness* includes a short paragraph with the information about the "forgotten genocide on Roma" or "porajmos (violence)", and a picture of Roma from the Belzec concentration camp from the year 1940.³⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the coordinator and curator of the Maribor Synagogue, Marjetka Bedrač, stated that "the Maribor Synagogue (...) tried to support teachers in teaching the contents of the Holocaust and genocide against the Roma. The Maribor Synagogue can help them; teachers are invited to various symposia, acquainted with examples of good practice."³⁴⁶

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the issue of textbooks is complex, reflecting the specificities of multinational federalism. The country has no centralized educational system - each entity (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosniak-Croat majority entity, and Republika Srpska, the Serb majority entity) has its own ministry and separate curricula. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is additionally structured into ten cantons, with each canton having its own educational ministry. Furthermore, Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats learn according to different "national" curricula for

history, geography, and language. In reality, this leads to three different versions of history that are taught in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This complexity is illustrated by Sanja Gladanac-Petrović from the University of Sarajevo:

“The textbooks used in the early 2000s mention Roma in just one sentence. Ganibegović’s textbook from 2001 says that ‘Serbs, Roma and Jews were persecuted’; from Mostar, the textbook of Mahmutović and Kaluža from 2003 says that ‘Roma, Serbs, Jews, and Croats who did not support the NDH were killed.’ In Republika Srpska, Ranko Pejić’s textbook says that ‘racial policies were directed against Serb, Roma, and Jewish neighbors who killed 700,000 in the Jasenovac camp.’ Roma are mentioned in just one sentence, along with other categories, without context and an explanation of why they were undesirable. Such a general story. Regardless of the fact that the fund of knowledge is modest, we do not contextualize what we have. We are not talking about why someone is unaccepted, and in that way, we are building the value system of the new generations.”³⁴⁷

Nevertheless, there are also countries where we noticed promising progress. For example, in Croatia, information about Samudaripen/Porrajmos has slowly entered the educational sphere, with significant progress being made in the last decade. Roma are included in the history curricula within the WWII/National Socialism theme.³⁴⁸ For example, a Croatian textbook *Povijest 8 - Profil*, by Snježana Koren³⁴⁹ includes the following information:

“By April 1941, race laws had been declared, modeled in accordance with Nazi laws. Under these laws, the Ustaša regime exercised a reign of terror against Jews and Roma. They were excluded from citizenship, and marriages with ‘Aryans’ were banned. (...) Mass killings of Serbs, Jews, and Roma began in April and May 1941. (...) There were several concentration camps and death camps where people were subjected to mass executions, torture, and forced labor (for example, in Jadovno, Pag, Stara Gradiška, etc.). The most infamous among them was the one in Jasenovac. It is estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 people were killed or died of illness, hunger, cold, and abuse. The majority were Serbs, Roma, and Jews, and those who were persecuted by the regime for political reasons. (...)”³⁵⁰

Snježana Koren is the only author of history textbook in Croatia who talks about the genocide committed by the Ustaša.³⁵¹

As Danijel Vojak highlights, “this field has also experienced a positive shift. There are teacher handbooks and expert lectures for educators dealing with the topic. But books still have too little content dedicated to this topic. At the same time, the curriculum for the subject Language and Culture of Roma National Minority (model C) was adopted in 2020, and it includes education on this topic. But a lot of effort is still needed, primarily regarding the work of the academic community supported by the Croatian government and international institutions.”³⁵² And indeed, in 2019, the *Handbook for Teachers - Roma in World War II in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945*, developed for history teachers and other interested actors, was published.

In Romania, too, the content and teaching of Holocaust-related lessons has greatly varied over the last decades, mirroring the official historiography's efforts to deal with the record of wartime deportations and following closely in its evolution the phases of Holocaust acknowledgment from communist times to present-day.³⁵³ But since 2007, a 12th-grade history textbook has provided detailed information about the Holocaust, including the Roma plight.³⁵⁴

The 2006 transition in the history school curricula from an event-based chronological presentation to a more thematic, multi-perspective approach provided the opportunity to stress elements of continuity and change across the socio-cultural dimensions. As a result, the Roma deportations were situated within the larger ethnic homogenization policies of the Antonescu regime. The estimated number of victims was briefly mentioned, too, without insisting on the root causes:

“During the interwar period, two Roma organizations emerged: The General Gypsy Association of Romania, led by archimandrite Calinic Popp-Șerboianu and the General Roma Union of Romania, led by G. Lăzăreanu-Lăzurică. During WWII, around 25,000 Roma were deported to Transnistria, of which many perished due to the lack of means of living.”³⁵⁵

That history textbook is rather concise and limited in its interpretation. Yet, it includes an excerpt from an archival document related to the Roma deportations, namely, a petition sent by a group of Romanian villagers to exempt a local Roma family from being “evicted to Transnistria.” The textbook remained in use until recent years, when a change in the school curricula led to the expansion of the Holocaust-focused section and the inclusion of a dedicated case study - *The Roma from Slavery to Emancipation* - containing historical notes, archival documents, and photos in the 8th and 12th grades history textbooks.

These changes set the stage for future detailed and accurate contextualization of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide by looking both deeper into this minority's pre-modern past (diachronic dimension) and across for direct parallels with the Jewish deportations (synchronic approach), stressing that “[t]he Antonescu regime applied the same treatment to the Roma [as to the Jewish population in Romania]. The latter were mass-deported and forced to live in the camps in Transnistria, without food, clothing, and any medical assistance.”³⁵⁶

The positive trend in Romanian history textbooks was also highlighted in the 2020 CoE report.³⁵⁷ Aurora Ailincăi, the Executive Director of the CoE's Observatory on History Teaching in Europe and one of the lead experts participating in the mentioned report, stressed that the Roma were represented differently across the history, geography, and civic education textbooks under review.³⁵⁸

However, more information and critique regarding the Romanian textbooks will be published soon. As Cezara David, the leader of the Center for Legal Resources' Anti-Discrimination Department, mentioned, “[t]he first new eighth grade textbooks were published in 2020 and these are the ones I have so eagerly awaited. The Center for Legal Resources will soon publish a detailed analysis of these. Three textbooks have been authorized for the 2020–2021 school year. Preliminary data show that, like the old textbooks, they remain nationalistic and distort the issues of slavery and the Holocaust.”³⁵⁹

Textbooks represent key and decisive tools for “transmitting government messages to the widest possible audience.”³⁶⁰ Thus, governmental institutions have the power to decide on the content of the history textbooks and the historical narrative they promote. Yet, across the region, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has not always been included or addressed accurately in history textbooks and teaching. The history textbooks have not mirrored documented individual stories of Roma victims/heroes of WWII. For example, we could not identify instances of history textbooks that include and consistently acknowledge Roma’s historical figures, resistance, or contributions.

Today, in most countries included in the project, there are established Roma historians and other researchers who collaborate with Roma or use in their work sources written by Roma.

Danijel Vojak emphasizes the crucial need for history textbooks and other school materials to integrate sources written by Roma, since most considered documents so far stem from the dominant groups, while “sources by Roma themselves are less available (e.g., testimonies).”³⁶¹

Moreover, Roma historians and experts should be consistently involved in preparing and reviewing history textbooks and auxiliary school materials addressing Roma’s history to guarantee accuracy and the participation of Roma voices in the writing process of their own history, and also to benefit from many unveiled sources that could enable and foster the writing of more inclusive and nuanced national histories and an enriched, diverse European history.

Reforming and rewriting the national histories, e.g., textbooks, to prevent history distortion and victim hierarchies is mandatory and still an overall desideratum throughout the region. Unbiased, accurate, just, well-informed, and qualitative teaching is also necessary to train and enhance children’s critical thinking and empathy and anti-racist skills, especially in these challenging times when Europe is confronted yet again with unfolding atrocities and the moral pledge of *Never Again* is under attack. As a United Nations report underlined, “[h]istory teaching in schools therefore appears to remain the best option to deal with a recent painful past because it affords an opportunity to exercise critical thinking and expose pupils to various narratives. This, however, calls for robust education of teachers.”³⁶² Furthermore, history textbooks and teaching inclusive of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide are essential for preserving the Roma identity and cultural and historical heritage and lifting Roma communities out of exclusion and discrimination, as Bashkim Ibishi from Advancing Together in Kosovo* stated.³⁶³

Other forms of cultural expression, including plays, movies, or documentary films, have strengthened the processes of memorializing elements of Roma history; however, their analysis would exceed the scope of this regional study.

In addition, there are other markers of memory that should be part of the Roma memorial culture, including history museums and memory museums, libraries, centers of documentation, and archives. Roma victims, heroes, and their history have often been left in the shadows. For example, in the region, there is still a need for a State

History or Memory Museum dedicated to the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. Such museums could contribute to creating historical consciousness and bringing relevant information into the public sphere. In addition, as the Durban Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance emphasized, “remembering the crimes or wrongs of the past, wherever and whenever they occurred, unequivocally condemning its racist tragedies and telling the truth about history are essential elements for international reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity.”³⁶⁴

Denial and Distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide

5.1. Theoretical Approaches: Denial and Distortion

The persecution and extermination of Roma and Sinti people by the Nazi and ally regimes constitute sweeping processes in a lingering history of anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism, as have the subsequent endeavors to overlook, silence, misrepresent, and distort this tragedy.

To date, there has been no scholarly, intercommunal, or political consensus regarding the place and the memory of the Roma and Sinti victims within or separate from the Holocaust analysis framework. There have similarly been no mainstream political or academic initiatives to develop an official definition of denial and distortion of the Roma history during the Holocaust and WWII in SEE. This oversight calls for special attention to ensure that prospective definitions and conceptualizations of denial and distortion involve sustained dialogue with Roma and Sinti and do not fall in the realm of prevailing epistemological and political disparities. Thus, in this section, we unpack some epistemological and political divergences regarding the suffering of Roma during the Holocaust and WWII and propose a possible categorization of denial and distortion of the Samudaripen/Porrajmos.

To conceptualize denial and distortion, we first have to discuss the place of Roma and Sinti victims in the history of the Holocaust, which constitutes the root of both epistemic and political divergences. Historians estimate that the Nazis and their allies murdered between 250,000 and 500,000 (or more) European Roma and Sinti. But the *who*, *what*, and *why* of the Roma and Sinti suffering are topics of ongoing historicization and debate.

The place of the Roma and Sinti victims in the Holocaust framework. There is no consensus regarding the place of the Roma and Sinti victims in the Holocaust framework at the level of intergovernmental organizations and Holocaust-related institutions. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the Museum) has advanced significant and mixed approaches to name and describe the plight of the Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust. The Museum has operated concurrently with the terms “Roma genocide” and “the Roma killed in the Holocaust.” While the Museum has created a heading section on their website for the Roma genocide, it also acknowledges a need for further research stating that “[i]t is not known precisely how many Roma were killed in the Holocaust.”³⁶⁵

The UN, CoE, and the European Parliament have aligned with the Museum’s broader, inclusive use of the term Holocaust and its mixed approach to defining the suffering of the Roma and Sinti victims during the Holocaust. For instance, the CoE website includes a heading section about the Roma genocide, which incorporates

detailed “information about the Roma Holocaust in the Member States” and reports using the Roma Holocaust terminology. Also, amongst other examples, in a 2021 statement, Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary-General of the CoE, affirmed that “[t]his year, and every year, it is important to pay tribute to the thousands of Roma men, women and children murdered in the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau on the night of 2 August 1944 and to the hundreds of thousands of Roma who perished in the Roma Holocaust at the hands of the Nazi regime and its allies (...). It is a good sign that more European countries now formally recognize European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.”³⁶⁶ Similarly, the UN, in its 2022 resolution condemning Holocaust denial and distortion, discusses the Holocaust as “the murder of nearly 6 million Jews, 1.5 million of whom were children, comprising one third of the Jewish people, in addition to the killing of millions of members of other nationalities, minorities, and other targeted groups and individuals.”³⁶⁷

Other intergovernmental organizations, whose member states sometimes coincide with those of the CoE, the EU, or the UN, take a different approach. Generally, the IHRA narrows the Holocaust to the Jewish victims and distinguishes between the Holocaust and the Roma genocide. At the same time, it acknowledges the other victims of the Holocaust and works gradually towards a more substantive memorialization of the Roma genocide. For example, in its foundational Stockholm Declaration, the IHRA equates the Holocaust to Shoah: “the Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization.” Nevertheless, the Declaration also makes references to “[t]he terrible suffering of the many millions of other victims of the Nazis [that] has left an indelible scar across Europe as well.”³⁶⁸

Such opposing official approaches, often taken by the same States who are represented in different intergovernmental fora, contribute to “bilateral,”³⁶⁹ double, mixed, parallel historicization of the Holocaust, often creating confusion at the national level, particularly in the spheres of normative acknowledgment, memorialization and commemorations, history teaching, compensation programs, and legal protections against denial and distortion.

The unique Jewish experience versus a broader and inclusive sense of the Holocaust remains a matter of academic controversy, too. As Gavriel D. Rosenfeld emphasizes, “[i]n books, articles, and internet postings, those defending the Holocaust’s uniqueness have battled with others who have vehemently challenged it on historical, moral, and political grounds. This debate has been characterized not only by passionate intellectual exchange, but also by sharply polemical accusations and recriminations.”³⁷⁰ Similarly, Manfred Gerstenfeld differentiates between legitimate, genuine academic debates about the uniqueness of the Holocaust and debates determined by distorting, political, and “sinister” purposes.³⁷¹

The uniqueness, “transcending uniqueness,”³⁷² or the singularity of the Holocaust as an injustice targeting the Jewish people has been sustained by several arguments: the unprecedented nature of that historical event; the scale of the Holocaust; an intent for complete Jewish destruction; understanding the Holocaust as an integral part of the history of antisemitism; distinguishing between “Holocaust” and “genocide” and between the Holocaust and other genocides in other geographical and temporal contexts. Scholars have generally prioritized the arguments placed under the umbrellas of intent and ideology.

However, this approach has also been met with criticism. For example, Israel Charny argues that “if our argumentation on behalf of the uniqueness of the Holocaust becomes a justification of other events of mass murder as natural in the history of the human species, (...) we are duty bound to reexamine the ways in which we present the unique aspects of the Holocaust.”³⁷³ And Michael C. Mbabu and Anna Marie Evans suggest that “[t]he Holocaust must be defined to include not just the Nazi and German atrocities against the Jews immediately before and during WWII, but also atrocities against other victims of different races and nationalities and social groups during the same period.”³⁷⁴

For the purpose of this chapter, however, we will not engage with the debates on the uniqueness of the Holocaust but discuss the intent of extermination in relation to the Roma victims, acknowledging that the nuanced conversation goes beyond this study and the investigated region.

The lack of an official document signed by Hitler to expressly state the aim of total extermination of the Jewish people (and for that matter, we will also add the Roma and Sinti people) was misused as a justification and defense in Holocaust denialist propaganda, including by David Irving.³⁷⁵ But as Deborah Lipstadt concludes, “deniers ignore the fact that the Nazis’ desire to conceal the Final Solution while it was happening made the absence of written orders from Hitler more probable than not.”³⁷⁶

Nazi legal loopholes and/or missing, inconsistent, or inexistent documents also gave rise to academic debates and divergent historiographies on intended complete extermination. Scholars thoroughly probed the anti-Jewish and/or the anti-Roma and Sinti laws, killings, and horrific outcomes, as indicative of an intent of partial or complete extermination. But the disagreements on the targets of intended complete extermination are ongoing.

Some scholars argue that there is a major qualitative difference between the plight of the Jews and the other peoples targeted by the Nazis.³⁷⁷ Generally, scholars belonging to that school of thought conclude that Nazis aimed for an ideologically driven complete destruction of the Jews (the Holocaust) but did not target all Gypsies (hence, the “Roma genocide”).³⁷⁸

Others take even an extreme, contentious approach, defining the Holocaust “in such a way as to make the Holocaust the only true case of genocide ever to occur”:

“I shall use the following rigorous definition: the concept of genocide applies *only* when there is an actualized intent, however successfully carried out, to physically destroy an *entire* group (as a group is defined by the perpetrators). Any form of mass murder that does not conform to the definition provided here, though not necessarily less immoral or less evil, will not be identified [as] genocide.”³⁷⁹

In turn, scholars like Ian Hancock maintain that both the “Jews and Gypsies were singled out for complete extermination (with the exception of certain exempted groups within each population) on the basis of race and/or ethnicity.”³⁸⁰ One of Hancock’s arguments focuses expressly on Germany. Amongst other documents, he cites a 1950 statement in the *Wiener Library Bulletin* substantiating that “Germany had in

1938 a gipsy population of 16,275. Of these, 85 percent were thrown into concentration camps, and no more than 12 percent survived.”³⁸¹ In addition, the notes of a 1942 meeting between Justice Minister Otto Thierack and Josef Goebbels underlined that “with regard to the destruction of asocial life, Dr. Goebbels is of the opinion that the following groups should be exterminated: Jews and Gypsies unconditionally, Poles who have served 3-4 years of penal servitude, and Czechs and Germans who are sentenced to death. (...) The idea of exterminating them by labor is best.”³⁸²

The Council of Europe takes an approach similar to Hancock on intended complete extermination, emphasizing that in Germany alone, “[o]n December 16, 1942, Heinrich Himmler gave out the directive that all ‘Gypsies’ still living in the ‘German Reich’ were to be deported to Auschwitz. The ‘Auschwitz Decree’ was the final revelation of a plan which had existed de facto since 1938 and had been partially carried out already, namely the complete extinction of ‘Gypsies.’ Himmler’s deportation order was directed against all ‘Gypsy-half breeds, Rom-Gypsies and Balkan Gypsies,’ the ‘degree of half-breeding’ being no longer of importance. The exception of a small group of ‘racially pure Gypsies,’ who were to be used as ‘museum exhibits’ in Himmler’s open-air museum, existed only on paper.”³⁸³

The U.S. Holocaust Museum has addressed the December 1942 episode, too, confirming that Himmler ordered “the deportation of all Roma from the so-called Greater German Reich,” with exceptions, including the Roma and Sinti of “pure Gypsy blood.” The Museum showed that although between 5,000 and 15,000 people could have been exempted, “local authorities often ignored the distinctions during roundups. Police authorities even seized and deported Roma soldiers serving in the German armed forces (Wehrmacht) while they were home on leave.”³⁸⁴ The U.S. Holocaust Museum also noted that “[i]n contrast to German policy towards German and Austrian Jews, in which people of so-called mixed blood were exempted from deportation measures (though not from forced labor), the SS and police, after much waffling and confusion, decided that “Gypsies” of “pure blood” were harmless and that the “half-breeds,” regardless of the percentage of “mixture” of blood, were dangerous and hence deportable.”³⁸⁵

To say that the history of the Holocaust was extremely complex would be an understatement. Millions of people died and were tortured and undignified in horrific ways. In some countries, all members of a group or more groups were killed; in others, all members of a group were intended to be killed, some were excepted, or many or the majority were murdered. But the members of the groups that the Nazis targeted were at risk and faced ostracization, terror, discrimination, and fear because of their membership in that group. The exceptions the Nazis made only aimed at helping their interests and ideology and diminishing the risks of revolt.

Denial and distortion. Political, institutional, and scholarly divergent approaches, such as the ones mentioned above, have impacted the legal and policy understanding of Holocaust denial and distortion. At the intergovernmental level, in 2013, the IHRA adopted the *Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion*. The definition of distortion includes five main forms of distortion, respectively:

- intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany;
- gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources;
- attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;
- statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. Those statements are not Holocaust denial but are closely connected to it as a radical form of antisemitism. They may suggest that the Holocaust did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of “the Final Solution of the Jewish Question”;
- attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by blaming other nations or ethnic groups.³⁸⁶

The IHRA also defines Holocaust denial as “discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place.”

As we can observe, the IHRA definitions of Holocaust denial and distortion refer exclusively to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, which is in line with IHRA’s definition of the Holocaust. And while in its working definition of antigypsyism/ anti-Roma discrimination, the IHRA acknowledges “distorting or denying persecution of Roma or the genocide of the Roma”³⁸⁷ as a contemporary manifestation of antigypsyism/ anti-Roma discrimination, it is yet to define and categorize forms of Samudaripen/ Porrajmos denial and distortion.

There are several other relevant IHRA documents on Holocaust denial and distortion. In 2020, the IHRA adopted a Ministerial Declaration, which also remembered the Roma genocide, stating that the States “acknowledge with concern that the neglect of this genocide has contributed to the prejudice and discrimination that many Roma communities still experience today.”³⁸⁸ In 2018, the IHRA published the *Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial Paper on Holocaust Denial and Distortion*, which does not include Roma and Sinti in the denial and distortion analysis. Nonetheless, it stipulates that “there is a need to utilize these resources as models to address related forms of denial and distortion, such as that of the genocide of the Roma or more contemporary genocides, such as the genocide of the Tutsi, where the phenomenon of denialism is becoming all too common.”³⁸⁹ However, IHRA’s Global Task Force against Holocaust Denial and Distortion focuses singularly on antisemitism.³⁹⁰

Similarly, in January 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning Holocaust denial and distortion, which defines Holocaust denial as “discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during the Second World War, known as the Holocaust or Shoah” and “any attempt to claim that the Holocaust did not take place, and may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation, and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people.”³⁹¹

In the text of the 2022 resolution, the UN also reconfirmed its mixed approach: while the resolution mentions the “millions of members of other nationalities, minorities and other targeted groups and individuals” as victims of the Holocaust, its definition of Holocaust denial focuses exclusively on Shoah. The 2022 UN Resolution also includes a definition of “distortion and/or denial of the Holocaust,” which duplicates IHRA’s categories of distortion established in 2013, focusing exclusively on the Shoah denial and distortion.³⁹²

The Council of Europe has not adopted a resolution or other document on Holocaust denial or distortion yet. But in a 2022 statement, Dunja Mijatović, the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, stated that “[t]hese manifestations are an insult to the memory of the millions of Jews and other persons persecuted and murdered during the Holocaust, undermine the foundations of our democracies and sow the seeds of destructive forces.”³⁹³ Thus, to date, the CoE maintains its inclusive approach in naming and defining the Holocaust and the targets of denial and distortion.

However, authors like Gavriel D. Rosenfeld critique this universalist and inclusive use of the Holocaust and label it “a process of appropriation and distortion.”³⁹⁴ The question of Holocaust appropriation has yet to be discussed in global institutional fora, knowing that the term has long been defined in some intergovernmental frameworks as a referent to the Nazi destruction of the Jews and all the other victims.

The term Holocaust has been internationalized and guarded by legal protections, being utilized as an inclusive term in official intergovernmental documents, including the experience of different categories of victims. Thus, if intergovernmental institutions define the Holocaust as an exclusive Jewish experience, the other victims and survivors, including Roma and Sinti, would remain outside legal protections on memorialization, commemoration, compensations, and against denial and distortion. Therefore, the solution cannot only be to adopt new documents (e.g., the UN 2022 resolution) restricting the Holocaust to one group but to also identify new inclusive concepts, practices, commemoration and remembrance processes, funding, and legal definitions and protections for all, including Roma and Sinti. Notably, the conversation should go beyond terms and intergovernmental spaces; there is still a crucial need for clarifications, inter-community dialogues, and for a focus on framing concepts that ensure legal protections for all/the other victims of the Nazis.

The scholarship on genocide, memory, denial, and distortion reflects similar dissensus, except that many of the journal articles and books have been written before the adoption of the above-mentioned definitions and resolutions.

Israel W. Charny has taken an inclusive approach. In 2003, he proposed a classification of denials of the Holocaust and other genocides into six major categories (and many subcategories) as follows: malevolent bigotry; self-serving opportunism; “innocent denials,” and/or “innocent disavowals of violence,” which maintain views of oneself and/or one’s people or society as just and not evil; “definitionalism” or insistence on defining cases of mass murders as *not genocide*; nationalistic hubris or self-involvement, which justify the exclusion of others; and human shallowness—the dulling and depletion of a genuine sense of tragedy and moral outrage.³⁹⁵ Some of the subcategories that Charny proposed include denials based on excluding cases from being defined as genocide and “contextualizers” (academics) attempting “to say that such and such mass killing was not *really* ‘genocide,’ but another type of event such as war, civil war, wartime starvation and disease, revolution, deportations and resettlement.” Charny also emphasizes denials through minimizing the number of deaths and “denials based on the often correct claims that not *all* members of a group were killed or were intended to be killed.”³⁹⁶

In opposition, Gavriel D. Rosenfeld has taken a Shoah-focused approach and argues that the process of appropriation and distortion of the Jewish Holocaust includes five major forms: deJudaizing, Americanizing, stealing, denying, and normalizing the Holocaust.³⁹⁷ One of the proposed forms of distortion, namely the *Americanization of the Holocaust*, is particularly relevant to our study. Rosenfeld discusses the examples of the establishment of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington to illustrate this proposed category of distortion. Rosenfeld sees the inclusive approach of the Museum as “the characteristically American drive for inclusiveness that led to the emergence of proposals to include other victims of Nazism in the museum, which threatened to expand the Holocaust into an event encompassing the death of eleven million people. This impulse was resisted, but the surfacing of an American tendency to universalize the Holocaust revealed the presence of a strong and lasting challenge to its Jewish character.”³⁹⁸ According to Rosenfeld’s approach, any efforts and attempts to include and remember the “other victims” of the Nazis as victims of the Holocaust would thus be distortions.

Esther Webman, Elie Wiesel, and others have also unpacked Edward Alexander’s “stealing the Holocaust” idea³⁹⁹ to point at Holocaust appropriation. But they mostly referred to genocides outside the Nazis’ atrocities that appropriate the Holocaust tag.

Similar to Rosenfeld, in 2009, Manfred Gerstenfeld proposed eight categories of abuse or distortion of the Holocaust: justification and promotion; denial; deflection and whitewashing; de-Judaization; equivalence; inversion; trivialization; obliterating Holocaust memory. In a 2007 journal article, Manfred Gerstenfeld also included depreciation and memory silencing as forms of distortion.⁴⁰⁰ He has also considered *Holocaust de-Judaization* a form of distortion or “Holocaust abuse.” Gerstenfeld refers to voiding or minimizing the Jewish character of the victims by “stressing the non-Jewish aspects of the Holocaust, taking it out of its specific historical context, and giving minimal attention to its uniqueness.”⁴⁰¹

Essentially, based on Rosenfeld's and Gerstenfeld's definitions of Holocaust de-Judaization and Americanization, the UN, CoE, the European Parliament, the inclusive national memorials of the Holocaust, the scholars, and the activists discussing the Holocaust as a shared experience of the Jewish, Roma and Sinti, and Black people, and millions other victims would fall into the pitfall of Holocaust distortion.

Other scholars disagree with such an approach. Michael C. Mbabuike and Anna Marie Evans put emphasis on the neglect of Black people as victims of the Holocaust. One central question Mbabuike and Evans ask is, "how historians of different creeds, nationalities, and races have attempted to interpret the history of the Holocaust? What are their preferences, biases, and personal experiences?"⁴⁰² Also, Ian Hancock, Sybil Milton, Grattan Puxon, and others categorize Roma and Sinti as victims of the Holocaust.

In addition, Hancock and Puxon allude to categories of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion, although they do not frame those categories as such. Among other categories, Hancock mentions the following narratives as justification for neglect, denial, and distortion of Roma and Sinti suffering during the Nazi regime: a) certain Romani groups sedentary for two or more years were to be exempted from death; b) some Roma and Sinti were even allowed to fight in the German army; c) Roma and Sinti were targeted not for racial reasons but rather for social reasons; d) some families were considered "pure" G*psies; e) Roma and Sinti received kinder treatment because parents and children were allowed to stay together in special family camps, unlike other prisoners.⁴⁰³

Notably, the denial and distortion of the Roma and Sinti Holocaust/Roma and Sinti Genocide started during and immediately after WWII, when Roma and Sinti were not allowed to have a voice in the Nuremberg trials and continued with no apologies offered by the German chancellor Adenauer and no Roma or Sinti included in the initial compensation programs. And today, blaming the Roma and Sinti and claiming that their behaviors constituted the drive for extermination is one of many forms of denial and distortion of the Roma and Sinti Holocaust/Roma and Sinti Genocide. However, to date, no working definitions of the Porrajmos/Samudaripen denial and distortion have been officially adopted.

In this study, we identified several categories of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion, which are based primarily on the Roma realities and their experiences of Porrajmos/Samudaripen distortion and denial in the eleven countries covered by the research and Holocaust literature.

5.2. Practices and Categories of Denial and Distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide or Samudaripen/Porrajmos

To date, there are no texts issued by national or intergovernmental bodies that recognize, define, or sanction the denial and distortion of Samudaripen/Porrajmos. Nevertheless, the 2020 IHRA working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination mentions practices of “distorting or denying persecution of Roma or the genocide of the Roma” and “glorifying the genocide of the Roma.”⁴⁰⁴

To understand the patterns and identify categories of denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, we studied knowledge production and broader public communication, including public statements of institutions, media programs, articles, and relevant posts on social media. This has proven a challenge, as the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide generally resides in a memory void across SEE.

Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial. Holocaust denial has long been defined and monitored by scholars, governments, and intergovernmental bodies. However, an official and internationally agreed definition mentioning the Holocaust Roma victims and Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial has not been elaborated yet. In the SEE context, we define denial as any attempt to negate or erase the established historical facts and the extent of the extermination of Roma during the Samudaripen/Porrajoms. Denial includes a) hardcore denial: discourse and propaganda that negate that the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide happened; and b) softcore denial: discourse and propaganda negating the destruction mechanisms, such as concentration camps, deportations, mass shootings, or starvation.⁴⁰⁵

We detected both old and more recent examples of evident hardcore denial in the public fora. In Romania, in 2002, Dan Berindei, President of the Romanian Academy’s History Section, said that “[t]here was no Holocaust in Romania. There were deportations to Transnistria, an antechamber of the Holocaust, yet there was no Holocaust per se.”⁴⁰⁶ And on June 12, 2003, a communiqué about an agreement between the National Archives of Romania and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington stated that the Romanian Government “encourages research concerning the Holocaust in Europe including documents referring to it and found in Romanian archives but strongly emphasizes that between 1940-1945 no Holocaust took place within Romania’s boundaries.”⁴⁰⁷ Some Bulgarian politicians have also been over the past years involved in Holocaust denial controversies.⁴⁰⁸

Hardcore denial has also entered the scholarship, educational institutions, and the public fora. In Bulgaria, as noted by Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva, some Bulgarian school teachers would not teach about the Samudaripen/Porrajoms because they

do not believe that Roma were targeted by the Nazi and their allies during the Holocaust in Europe.⁴⁰⁹

In Romania, hardcore denialists have maintained that the Samudaripen/Porrajoms, just like the Jewish Shoah, was a “post-war invention” aimed to tarnish Romania’s good image and extract “reparation money” from upstanding Romanian citizens constantly victimized by some international occult plot.⁴¹⁰ Romanian denialists have also engaged in obstinately negating the mass destruction of Jewish and Roma deportees in Transnistria, explaining it away as a massive “Zionist mystification” and an insidious attack against national values.⁴¹¹ Taking a page from Radu Theodoru’s controversial negationist book from 1996, Vasile Zărnescu, a former Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) officer, wrote several articles and books denouncing the idea of the extermination of Jews and Roma in Transnistria as “pure fabrication” and the presumed criminal intention behind the deportations as “a misconstruction of historical facts.” Rejecting the label of “revisionist” as misleading but striving, at the same time, to “set the historical record straight,” the author distorted the death toll among the Roma deportees displaced to Transnistria and denied the facts of systematic mass murders or extermination camps:

“(…) Therefore, there were no extermination camps for Yids [“jidani” in the original Romanian text and Gypsies [“țigani” in the Romanian text] for the simple reason that they were Yids or Gypsies. There were concentration camps where hard, even excessive, work was extracted because it was required to meet the war necessities and supplant the German labor force, which was fighting, unfortunately, on two fronts, on the one hand against the decadent Western civilization and on the other, against “communism” in the U.S.S.R. Such a work camp was opened at Auschwitz, where the largest and the most modern factory in the whole world was set up for the manufacturing on an industrial scale of synthetic fuel and rubber needed in Germany for military and civilian use. (...)”⁴¹²

Zărnescu also dismissed out of hand the testimonies of Jewish and Roma deportation survivors as “unreliable” or “inventions,” fabricated by “impostors” and popularized by “occult international groups” bent on overwhelming present-day Romanians with a misplaced sense of collective guilt and putting forward compensation claims, “for this is exactly the main goal of the Holocaust propaganda: to make us feel guilty of having exterminated [the Jews and the Roma- m.n.] and to ‘pinch our money,’ as Gypsies do.”⁴¹³

In SEE, softcore denialism has brought attention to the Jasenovac camp, negating its place in the genocide. In 2017, the Croatian Weekly Magazine and the website narod.hr published a text entitled *Jasenovac – ‘Gypsy Camp.’ Manufactured mega-crime imposed on Croatians*. The article claimed that “[t]here is no evidence on mass murders of Roma in Jasenovac” and inquired, “[h]ow is it possible, on 400 square meters of Jasenovac, the so-called Gypsy camp, to kill more Roma than had lived in NDH.”⁴¹⁴

Denialists have also described the Jasenovac death camp as “a concentration camp for all refugees.” For example, in 2020, the website Glas Koncila published Tomislav Vuković’s article claiming that “Jasenovac was a concentration camp for all refu-

gees, even Croats. November 21, 1941, 1,500-2,000 Croats from Donji Lapac and Boričevac that were fleeing from Četniks came to Jasenovac from where they were later moved to Slavonija. Into the villages of Mlaka and Jasenovac, inside the domain of Jasenovac camp, 'muhađiri'[refugees] from Bosnia were inhabited."⁴¹⁵ The article made no mention of Jasenovac as a "death factory." It also conflated the refugees in the village of Jasenovac with the prisoners in the Ustaša concentration camp of Jasenovac. Yet, the author did refer specifically to the camp when claiming that "[m]any ended up in the Jasenovac camp because of crime, fraud, dishonest business, etc."⁴¹⁶

Harmful propaganda has also diminished the atrocities in the Jasenovac camp by labeling it as a labor camp. In a Glas Koncila series, Tomislav Vuković asserted that the "[s]urviving Jasenovac camp prisoner, in his description, unconsciously contributed to the dilemma about the initial purpose of Jasenovac as a death factory with daily mass murders of prisoners, or whether it was a labor camp with various manufacturing plant where prisoners were free workforce."⁴¹⁷ And selective parts of a text by camp prisoner Milko Riffer were used as "evidence:"

"All camp prisoners work in their profession if possible. The field of work is diverse. There are several industries in the camp, and all crafts are present, great economy with that. There is the manufacturing of brick, carpentry, tannery, cheese, and dried meat goods, ground melioration, different types of industries being built, residential, office, and economic buildings, a dam on river Sava, etc. A grand plan is designed that is to turn Jasenovac into a true industry combine."⁴¹⁸

Despite its misrepresentation intended as damning evidence, Milko Riffer's text was, in fact, a critique of the Jasenovac camp, as the introduction to that first paragraph made clear: "I read a newspaper article about Jasenovac. 'Jasenovac is not a sanatorium, but it is also not a purgatory.' According to that article, Jasenovac is a labor camp."⁴¹⁹

Furthermore, to deny that the Jasenovac camp was a death camp, Tomislav Vuković cited testimonies that alluded to it as a labor camp (as if one excluded the other), which amounted to the following: prisoners performed forced labor in the chain factory, brickyard, electricity center, sawmill, farm economy, tailoring shop, dairy farm, etc. He went as far as to frame the Jasenovac concentration camp as a place of piety or one where prisoners were treated well (for example, in *"Sergeant Prpić treats prisoners well"*). Vuković also attempted to normalize and romanticize life in the concentration camp.

In the investigated region, we also identified attempts to negate the intentionality of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide or the mechanisms of destruction, such as the deportations in Transnistria, claiming that Roma were simply victims of disease and hunger. In Romania, various individuals, groups, and associations lent credence to and accommodated claims that the deportations were inevitable due to Roma's "widespread criminality" and that the mass destruction of the deportees in Transnistria was "unintentional," being the outcome of cold, hunger, infections, and other "factors outside the control of the Antonescu regime," stopping short from openly blaming Roma victims for their own demise.⁴²⁰

Some also minimized the number of victims and the cruelty and impact of the extermination mechanisms, but those would be discussed as categories of distortion. However, the distortion mechanisms are often more subtle and much more diverse in manifestation than denial, as their promoters accept the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide as truthful but minimize, excuse, destroy, and misrepresent elements of it.

Historical silence and obliteration of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. This form of distortion has sometimes been intentional and obvious. Still, it has often been unintentional, unseen, and subtle, resulting from old established concealed patterns of fostering and prioritizing dominant, white narratives as the norm, the standard. This form of distortion refers to a wide dismissal, obliteration, a lack of interest, and a general minimization of the Samudaripen/Porrajoms and the suffering of the Roma people during the Holocaust in political, cultural, historical, academic, media, and societal spaces, representations, and symbols. Furthermore, along with the suffering of Roma being ignored and sidelined, most often monitoring, prevention, and combating distortion and denial do not exist.

This form of distortion is often met in the practices of institutions dealing with the memory of the crimes committed during the Holocaust and WWII. We could theorize such practices of dismissal and lack of interest in relation to anti-Roma racism/anti-gypsyism, knowing that across SEE, this form of racism deems Roma as unworthy of attention. An obvious example of historical silence and obliteration is that the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is regarded as a secluded history, not worthy of being included in textbooks, museums, or sites of memory.

The general silence over the history of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and the widespread racism against the Roma are interrelated and dangerous elements, especially in the context of atrocity prevention and human rights. In Serbia, for example, the general attitude (contrasting with the attitude towards the extermination of other victims) is that whether one speaks or not of the mass atrocities perpetrated against the Roma makes no difference.

In Kosovo*, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide dwells in a memory abyss. The absence of a Porajmos/Samudaripen history, sites of memory, and symbols in the public sphere reinforces the lack of interest in this topic in the academic inquiry, politics, media, and education curricula.

Similarly, in Slovenia, the experts we interviewed underlined the oblivion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. "I think it's more about hidden facts because the issue was not dealt with much," Vojko Kunaver, Coordinator of the Subject Group for History and the Regional Group for Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities at National Education Institute Slovenia, said.⁴²¹ And Vera Klopčič talked about the misunderstanding of the Porajmos/Samudaripen, too. "May this be considered denial?" Klopčič asked, pointing at the misunderstanding of the forms and motives of mass violence and the destruction of the Roma as a people.⁴²²

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the analysis and the interviews indicated an obliteration of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide as well. In general, media products do not cover topics relevant to Roma on a regular basis. As Enes Omerović, Senior Researcher at the University of Sarajevo, Institute for History, described, not many

people, spaces, and projects include this issue, and often, the truth is not distorted but totally ignored: "There is complete indifference here. Ignorance is considerable. (...) I have not encountered the issue of denying crimes against Roma in public, but I also rarely encounter the story of their suffering."⁴²³ Similarly, Sanja Gladanac-Petrović, Senior Researcher at the University of Sarajevo, Institute for History, explained that the truth is not distorted as the Roma are simply "irrelevant" to the political elites. She also emphasized that when reporting on the August 2 commemorations, the media does not give the context of the crimes - "who committed them?; why?; why were Roma unwanted?"⁴²⁴ Moreover, as our analysis of online and social media showed, news articles commemorating the Samudaripen/Porrajoms receive little attention from readers, if any at all. Furthermore, at the societal level, there is widespread ignorance and lack of information and interest about the atrocities perpetrated against Roma during WWII.

In some countries, particularly in countries where the Holocaust did not happen, or the persecution of Roma has not been documented systematically yet, such as Albania, Bulgaria, or Greece, we observed a complete historical silence, a pattern of non-remembrance and disremembrance of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. In Greece, the patterns of anti-Roma prejudice or hate speech are not usually coupled with denial of the Samudaripen/Porrajoms or the specific history of the Greek Roma during WWII. Instead, the Roma history is almost inexistent in the academic and public sphere. The level of historicization of Roma's experience during WWII is deficient. Silence and oblivion are the predominant weapons of distortion.

WWII Roma historicization in Greece remains low, although there have been attempts to bring this history to the surface since the 1980s. Thorough research and a more exhaustive examination of the historiography of the Greek 20th century are necessary to understand that phenomenon, but through interviews, we tracked down two specific phenomena. First, several Roma organizations have not focused on the history of the Greek Roma during WWII as intensively as other leaders, researchers, and NGOs in other countries have. And second, some of the researchers who dealt with the WWII history of the Greek Roma, or with the history of Greek Roma, in general, have been hesitant to study the topic. Some have feared that such work would add fodder to European nationalist and nation-building projects or drive the development of a new Roma identity, which would lead to falsifying the integrity of the historical quest. For instance, Professor Lambros Baltiotis, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and History, Panteion University, talked about such "risks" at a European level: "[i]t seems to me that there is a trend to create a historical narrative, similar to a national narrative - a history of the Roma, which will contain all the elements that characterize a national narrative, the long past, the glorious moments, the victimization. It seems to me that this is a priority for several Roma communities in Europe. It does not concern Greece so much. But, perhaps, it will happen in Greece in the future by Roma activists (though the term activist is not the best)."⁴²⁵ Eva Politou, an expert with a Phd in pedagogics and a specialized teacher in intercultural education, agreed with this perspective and noted that "[t]he recognition of the so-called 'forgotten Holocaust' was a fundamental demand of the European and American political Roma movement. It has significant importance since it is related to the demand for (...) civil rights and equality. However, the 'forgotten Holocaust' was not necessarily part of the historical experience of every Roma community in Europe. (...) There is the danger [e.g., if the narrative of the 'for-

gotten Holocaust' prevails] that the actual historical experiences will be replaced by inaccurate information and largely arbitrary interpretations."⁴²⁶

An accurate history and thorough historical research about Roma and any other population remain mandatory for societies aware of the risks of repeating a violent past. And the study of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide history should not be discouraged by general fears of rising nationalism. Truth-telling and truth searching about the realities of the Greek Roma during WWII are moral obligations that we owe to the victims, and they could also contribute to understanding the lasting mechanisms and pervasive narratives that enable anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism to be reproduced.

In conclusion, the disregard and devaluation of the Roma suffering during WWII has been triggered by various motivations, interests, and fears. The driving forces behind such efforts to silence, conceal, and underrate the sufferings of Roma victims exist on a nuanced spectrum from willful ignorance of documented historical facts, selective use of partial or scarce information, and deliberate efforts to dismiss settled facts.

Minimization of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. Such discourses and propaganda do not deny that the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide occurred but minimize the number of the Roma victims or the cruelty and impact of the mechanisms of destruction.

In several SEE countries, we identified discourse and propaganda minimizing the number of victims. In Bulgaria, according to Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva, some portions of the society do not believe that the number of Roma murdered in Europe during WWII was true.⁴²⁷ In the country report on Bulgaria, Hristo Kyuchukov also described personal experiences from lectures he delivered in schools when teachers claimed that "the Gypsies are definitely lying" about the number of deaths of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in Europe. In Romania, we encountered a similar minimization of numbers, but the discourse and propaganda have focused expressly on the atrocities committed by the Romanian authorities. Some voices have routinely insisted that the total number of Roma victims has been exaggerated and that the murders were the "unfortunate result" of factors outside the control of the Antonescu regime.⁴²⁸

Croatian denialists have similarly launched narratives minimizing the number of Roma victims, particularly in relation to the Jasenovac concentration camp. There have been many claims, from suggesting that the official number of Roma victims was higher than the Croatian Roma population at that time to debating the number of Roma that could fit in the "400 square meters of camp III C,"⁴²⁹ the so-called "Gypsy camp." An article published in 2014 suggested that the "number of Jasenovac victims has always been questionable. (...) That is especially apparent when it comes to Roma victims (...)"⁴³⁰

In response to the distortion of the number of Roma victims of Samudaripen/Porrajmos, historian Slavko Goldstein explained that "[g]athering data on Roma that had lost their lives was very difficult so, until 2003, a Croatian historian, Narcisa

Lengel-Krizman made a list of 8,750 names, surnames, and other data on Roma from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina killed in Jasenovac. In the following years, research conducted on behalf of the Jasenovac Memorial Site paid special attention to investigating Roma victims, so today, in 2016, there are 16,173 Roma victims from the entire NDH recorded on the Jasenovac victim list, 5,688 of which were men, 4,877 women and 5,608 children under 14 years of age. It is inhumane to remain silent about that genocide."⁴³¹

Nevertheless, across the region, the official and accepted estimations of the Roma victims are generally conservative. Yet, even those conservative estimations are often distorted.

Misrepresentation of the racialization of Roma during the Holocaust and dismissing of its function in the genocide. This distortion consists in twisting or silencing the fact that the Nazis created and reinforced racist ideas to target Roma and justify the mass atrocities, labeling Roma as an asocial and criminal race. This category of distortion is manifested in discourses and propaganda, including those that: a) uncritically designate "Gypsy criminality" and other "behavioral patterns" as the cause of the genocide; or b) highlight the "exceptions" made by the Nazis to evidence that Roma were perceived as Aryans. This form of distortion is used to blame the Roma victims for the genocide or to sideline and undervalue the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide.

The claim that specific Roma behavioral and social patterns of criminality, nomadism, or asocial conduct, and not racist ideology or practices, led the Nazis and their allies to exterminate, deport, or persecute particular Roma neglect obvious evidence: a) Nazis and their allies exterminated Roma children, elders, women, and men, who could not have a uniform "behavioral pattern;" b) within countries, the processes of cleansing "criminality" targeted only Roma, not to all people with criminal records, and thus, it was racially motivated; and c) the Roma were amongst the first to be targeted by racial persecution.

As Sybil Milton points out, "[t]he Nazi concept of criminality became a racial category when applied to Gypsies, anchored already in 1937 and 1938 in the implementation of new measures 'to combat the Gypsy plague.'"⁴³² Moreover, the notion that a specific group is collectively characterized by asocial and criminal behaviors is a central element of behavioral racism. In fact, such "criminality" and "behavior pattern" narratives imply that the Roma were the cause of and to blame for their oppression.

Claims have been made that the Nazis and their allies targeted only "criminal" and nomadic Roma. For example, in Bulgaria, several voices suggested that the Roma in Europe were persecuted because of their criminality.⁴³³ And such narratives can be easily found nowadays on social media to justify anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism. Furthermore, in Romania, Ion Coja, a professor of linguistics, writer, and former Romanian Senator, known for his close ties with the nationalist association "Vatra Românească" and his public support for V. Zărnescu's conspiracy theories, claimed that the Roma deportees were largely criminals, spies, and nomads and therefore to blame for Marshal Antonescu's decision to order their "evictions" to Transnistria:

“(…) it is a thing well-known among Gypsies that only those Gypsies who had committed serious crimes were settled across the Bug. Among the Gypsies ‘persecuted’ by the Antonescu regime, there were many nomads who had acted as spies for the Russians. Marshal Ion Antonescu did not implement a policy of collective deportation of the Gypsies, as it is now attempted in Italy, but targeted only those who brought shame on their own Gypsy kin and tarnished Romania’s image.”⁴³⁴

In fact, the author echoed Marshal Antonescu’s own arguments to justify the deportation measures. Coja also claimed that the deportations were “targeted social measures” justified by Marshal Antonescu’s alleged “salutary” intention of safeguarding public safety and evacuating only “anti-social elements.” Thus, he conveniently twisted and silenced well-documented historical facts, including that the deportations incorporated entire Roma families and children. Ion Coja denied the process of Roma racialization during deportations, using the racist claim that “criminality” was a collective Roma feature and ignoring that the Antonescu regime did not target all Romanians with a criminal record, but stamped only the Roma as “criminals.”

Similarly, in Croatia, authors like Mladen Koić and Nikola Banić also alluded to so-called collective Roma social and behavioral patterns, arguing that the term G*psy, and consequently the Roma sent to concentration camps, referred only to Roma without a permanent residence, possessions, and professions. They cited Antun Miletić, author of *Concentration Camp Jasenovac 1941-1945*, who concluded that “not all Roma were referred to camps, but only Roma nomads without a permanent residence, as well as criminals.”⁴³⁵ As evidence, Miletić used archival documents stating that “‘Gypsies’ can be considered only Gypsy nomads, without permanent residence and profession, without possessions, especially land, as well as without permanent membership within a human community. Therefore, the evacuation can only apply to Gypsy nomads.”⁴³⁶ Furthermore, Koić and Banić included as evidence a memorandum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of NDH that dealt with the racial affiliation of G*psies and stated that “[i]t is declared, that the so-called white Muslim Gypsies are not to be touched, as they are considered Aryan, hence no already stated measures or those to be brought against Gypsies are to be applied to them. The so-called white Gypsies are all members of Islam who correctly perform their religious rituals, get married and wedded to other Muslim Croats, have their own houses, and are mostly craftsmen, so in accordance to an order by the Leader [Poglavnik, Ante Pavelić] are to be considered Aryan.”⁴³⁷

However, the very simple differentiation of Roma between “white” and “black” Roma is clear evidence of racial categorization. Such distinctions do not prove non-racially motivated crimes or the absence of racial ideology; on the contrary, they contribute to a distorted acceptance of race as a biological construction of pure and distinct biological races. Additionally, those documents refer to the Roma of the Muslim faith, who were, after the intervention of the Muslim part of the Ustaša government, exempt from the order of transportation to the Ustaša concentration camp of Jasenovac; thus, they referred only to the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e., areas where Roma were mostly members of Islam.

As Vera Klopčič pointed out in the case of Slovenia, and the same conclusion can apply to other countries in SEE, to this day, many people continue “to accept the

explanation that Roma were non-social, anti-social individuals with their innate tendencies to crime and that Roma were persecuted for criminality during the Nazi era. (...) They were persecuted and condemned to be unworthy of life. This is also written in racial laws. (...) This is a distortion of the genocide (...). It is a matter of belittling the Roma group as one very close to crime."⁴³⁸

To prove that Roma were not constructed as an asocial race, thus racialized, others have claimed that the Nazis distinguished between sedentary and nomadic Roma, and that essentially, the Nazis and their allies targeted the asocial "way of life" of the nomadic Roma.

In and beyond the research conducted for this study and the SEE region, the scholarship has identified many laws, ordinances, and official documents mentioning or alluding to racialization, including the separation of Roma between white and black g*psies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Also, at the level of the Nazi leadership, Robert Ritter, the Head of the Nazi Health Ministry's Race Research Division, maintained that the G*psy blood was "very dangerous for the purity of the German race." A 1938 Nazi ordinance stated that "[e]xperience in the fight against the Gypsy menace and the knowledge derived from race-biological research have shown that the proper method for attacking the Gypsy problems seems to be to treat it as a matter of race."⁴³⁹

Intergovernmental organizations and Holocaust-related institutions also emphasize that the Roma killings were racially motivated. On its webpage, the Holocaust Memorial Museum states that "among the groups the Nazi regime and its Axis partners singled out for persecution on so-called racial grounds were the Roma (...) the Nazis judged Roma to be 'racially inferior.' The fate of Roma in some ways paralleled that of the Jews."⁴⁴⁰ And the Council of Europe underscores that in spite of the "Aryan descent" question, G*psies were considered an "asocial race."⁴⁴¹

Within and beyond the scope of this study, scholars have also referred to the "exceptions" made by the Nazis as "evidence" employed to prove that the Roma and Sinti were not targeted as a people or a racialized group. Their overarching goals were to demonstrate that Roma and Sinti were not victims of the Holocaust and there was no intent to completely exterminate them, or to sideline the Roma and Sinti victims. Such examples included the fate of "racially pure Gypsies," the "half-breeds," and those "integrated into German society." For example, in a 1999 article, Rosenfeld sustained that the "[o]fficial Nazi policy towards the Gypsies was marked by far less consistency than that towards the Jews. So, while certain racially 'pure' German Gypsies were not targeted for death, and while some Gypsies in other Nazi-occupied countries were left unmolested, *all* Jews whom the Nazis viewed as Jews (and the definition was quite broad) were designated for destruction."⁴⁴²

However, the Nazis made exceptions in the case of other victims, too.⁴⁴³ But that is not a relevant point, as the fact that not all members of a group were killed or intended to be killed does not justify or diminish the acts and cruelty of the genocide. In addition, some of the exceptions the Nazis made were well calculated to fit into their plans. As Michaela Raggam-Blesch notes, in the case of the Jewish victims, "[e]xisting marriages between Jews and non-Jews, as well as the presence of their

“half-Jewish” children, presented a permanent threat to the integrity of the Nazi regime. (...) Internal differences within the Nazi party and concerns that ‘Aryan’ family members would cause public unrest ultimately spared this group from the full force of the radical measures applied to the rest of the Jewish population, even if plans for the ultimate inclusion of ‘half-Jews’ and Jewish partners of ‘mixed marriages’ in the Final Solution were never abandoned.”⁴⁴⁴

Thus, the debates over “exceptions” are profoundly misleading. Such exceptions and paradoxes have been part of the machinery of racism and the political and social construction of race. Conceptually, it is misleading to use and accept “miscegenation,” mixed races, intermarriages, and other similar “exceptions” as “evidence” proving that Nazi policies did not racialize or target a certain people or another. In fact, the “half-breeds” Roma and Sinti constituted the subjects of pseudoscientific inquiries and horrific medical experiments and were key elements in the making of racial distinctions and biracial racism.

Hierarchies of victims and genocides. In some of the studied countries, we identified claims that demanded or alluded to the fact that the victims belonging to the dominant populations should be prioritized over Roma as victims of the Holocaust and other injustices. We also encountered cases when the commemoration of Roma victims of the Holocaust was disputed, compared to, and challenged by the commemoration of other Holocaust victims or other categories of atrocities at the national level. Thus, this type of distortion involves creating a hierarchy of victims and genocides based on the belief that the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and the Roma victims were not as significant as other Holocaust victims and other genocides. Such claims trivialize and relativize the racial persecutions, deportations, massacres, and the Nazi and ally extermination policies implemented at the European and national levels to eliminate the Roma people. Such assertions stamp Roma victims as less worthy or worthless.

We identified victim and pseudo-victim hierarchies in several online posts. During our analysis of Facebook posts in Serbia, we examined closer an October 2020 post about the history of the Topovske Šupe camp⁴⁴⁵ and the Roma genocide perpetrated in Belgrade. The post had garnered 26,267 views, 2,704 likes, comments, and shares, and 177 comments in total. Some of the comments inquired about the lack of acknowledgment of the Serbian victims: “you didn’t mention the Serbs interned in the camp” or “where are the places of commemoration for the Serbs? We have monuments for the Gypsies and the Jews, but not for the Serbs (...)” No Serbs were interned in the Topovske Šupe camp; moreover, these examples constitute a typical manifestation of distortion through pseudo-victim hierarchies.

Another post published the same month about a “preserving the Topovske Šupe camp” project similarly received 64,461 views, 9,093 interactions, and 176 comments. Some of the comments alluded to similar victim and pseudo-victim hierarchy and relevance: “as long as the camps for Jews and Roma are mapped (not for the Serbs, who suffered the most in numbers and which you do not mention), it is a disreputable work that has nothing to do with the desire to preserve anything.” Another comment stated that “Serbs and other peoples were taken to all the German camps on the territory of Serbia (...) none of them were only for Jews and Roma,” and “[a]s far as I know, in all these camps, in addition to Jews and Roma, there were also Serbs.”⁴⁴⁶

A clearer example of victim hierarchy is related to a campaign entitled *Proud Roma Free Europe*, initiated by the the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN). On August 2, 2021, the European Roma Holocaust Day, ERIAC supported the placement of several billboards in various cities of Serbia to remember the memory of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. One of the billboards in Novi Sad was vandalized with a drawing of a Nazi symbol,⁴⁴⁷ but the incident did not receive much attention from the media or the public. However, there is a comment that asked, “when will you do a billboard for Serbian victims?”⁴⁴⁸ Similar to the social media posts, the frustration was that Serbians do not talk enough about the Serbian victims and that they must talk about them in the first place, and only afterwards about the “others” (Roma and Jews).

In addition, in the history of Holocaust commemorations, there have been several situations during which Roma were treated as secondary, unworthy victims. In Slovenia, the Roma activist and researcher Jožek Horvat Muc remembered that during the socialist period, when young people would visit Jasenovac and some other memorials, they were extensively informed about the political prisoners who were interned there, and about the Jews, Serbs, and Slavs. But the Roma were mentioned as an insignificant afterthought: “Roma were always mentioned at the end.”⁴⁴⁹

Sometimes, politicians also send through their absence the message that the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has no relevance for them. In North Macedonia, in 2018, the Roma MP, Samka Ibraimoski, and Minister without Portfolio, Aksel Ahmedoski, expressed public disappointment with the Government because, as they claimed, on the event marking August 2, no representative of the Government or MP found it relevant to attend the commemoration of the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day: “Not only with the representatives of the Government, but I am also disappointed with my fellow MPs. This means that even on such occasions, there is discrimination. Distinguished representatives of the Government and fellow MPs, we want to build a society for all, and we do not implement it. Roma are part of this country and are citizens of this country.”⁴⁵⁰

Occasionally, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has also been perceived as part of a hierarchy of WWII atrocities and injustices as well as other national historical events. In Kosovo*, the acknowledgment of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide was residing afloat in the gulf between Albanian and Serb competing narratives and the memory of WWII, never meeting any of them. The collective memory in Kosovo* has been premised on the national frames representing the nation as a homogenous imagined community in opposition to “the Other.” In both Albanian and Serb strategies of symbolic nation-building, Roma have been designated the role of “the Other.”

Glorification, whitewashing, and honoring of perpetrators, acts, and symbols of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. This distortion category consists of denying or whitewashing the responsibility of individual and State offenders and glorifying, rehabilitating, praising, and honoring perpetrators and symbols of Samudaripen/Porraimos.

In Romania, particularly in the early 1990s, ushered in by the fall of the communist regime, the institutions of the new democratic regime have been hesitant to tackle either the grim legacy of the communist grand narrative or the suppressed

memory of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. Taking advantage of the state of disarray of the official historiography, a growing number of trained and dilettante historians sought to compensate for the communist-era distortions about WWII by over-emphasizing “suppressed” episodes of the country’s wartime anti-Soviet resistance and “forgotten” nationalist figures, i.e., Marshal Ion Antonescu, misrepresented as fallen victims to “post-war Communist reprisals.”⁴⁵¹ The seeds of the cult of anti-communist heroes found their most fertile soil in ultra-nationalist circles, who relentlessly pushed for the said figures’ rehabilitation in the history books and the courts of law and continue to obstruct constructive dialogue about the Roma deportations to Transnistria.⁴⁵² Some portrayed Marshal Antonescu as the embodiment of the Romanian national values.⁴⁵³ But since the 2000s, after Romania’s accession to the EU, there has been a gradual change in the containment of the personality cults of convicted war criminals turned into tragic war heroes.

In Romania, we also encountered distortion by whitewashing the atrocities committed by the perpetrators. For example, Mircea Dogaru wrote that Antonescu’s decision to deport Roma to Transnistria was taken to save Romanian Roma from “certain extermination” in the Nazi camps:

“As for the Gypsies, Ion Antonescu (...) displaced them in order to protect them, just as he did with the Jews who were helped to flee to Palestine, of the murderous fury of the German occupant; they were not driven outside Romanian borders, but settled with the purpose of exploiting the lands and households deserted by the Russian occupying forces in the territories East of the Dnieper liberated by the Romanians. They were massacred by the Soviets, not by the Romanian Army (...).”⁴⁵⁴

In Kosovo*, there is a need for extensive research, education, and civil society activism to identify the forms of distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. However, an example of glorifying perpetrators of the Holocaust was evident in a recent debate around a project of the Ministry of Culture of Kosovo* supported financially by the United Nations Development Fund and the EU. The project involved the restoration of the house of Xhafer Deva, a founding member of the Albanian puppet government installed by Germany in 1943⁴⁵⁵ in the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica. The project was eventually suspended, exposing dissensus over WWII memory in Kosovo*, but this example speaks to the need for meaningful strategies of dealing with the past based on evidence that would contribute towards a shared understanding of the “difficult memories” and act against amnesia, oblivion, and distortion.

We also identified cases when members of the society involved in this form of distortion, especially in online fora, cast the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide as a positive historical event, praising Nazi governments and leaders, and promoting, instigating, and alluding to the extermination mechanisms as a present-day “solution” for the Roma. In Slovenia, in 2020 and 2021, the web page 24 ur [24 hours] published news articles about the commemoration in Murska Sobota, where events were held to mark the European Roma Holocaust Day. In both cases, comments praising the Croats for exterminating the Roma during the Holocaust were made. “The Croats immediately settled the Roma problem during WWII and did not wait until 1944!” one person wrote. And another one added that “history tells us that the Roma were

a threat to modern society at the time! But the Croats, the Croats (...) thoroughly cleaned up the NDH. Initially, the Roma were exploited for labor, e.g., for digging graves (...), but there was no room for Roma there, so they were killed and thrown into the Sava for Belgrade (...)."⁴⁵⁶ Similarly, when newspapers published on Roma related topics, people wrote posts expressing agreement with the genocide or admiration for Hitler. In 2017, when a newspaper reported about the displaced Strojanc-family, people published comments clearly stating that "Hitler was absolutely right about the Gypsies! Too bad he didn't clean them all up!" ⁴⁵⁷

We also identified similar praises of Hitler in Kosovo*. For instance, in 2020, Kultplus published an article entitled *Holocaust Did Not Kill Roma, It Only Made Them Stronger* and shared it on Facebook. The article talked about the Roma victims at Auschwitz and told the story of survivors. Only a few people commented on it, but those few comments primarily involved indifference, racism, and denial. One person wrote: "do we even know where Roma people come from?" And another comment asked, "why do you care about the Roma people? Hitler was going to get rid of them, and that genocide would've gotten rid of useless people."⁴⁵⁸

In North Macedonia, the 2021 research of Romaliticó⁴⁵⁹ also pointed at people commenting on the Facebook and Twitter posts of different media portals and praising Hitler and the Nazis for the measures against Roma. Some of the comments portrayed the types of measures that Hitler and the Nazi regime implemented as the only solution for the "Roma problem": "Only Hitler for the gypsies (...)."⁴⁶⁰ Others conveyed that Roma who survived the Holocaust should have been dead: "Hitler screwed up; several souls hide from him (...)."⁴⁶¹

In Bulgaria, too, Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva and others mentioned online comments praising extermination mechanisms, particularly the concentration camps: "the Roma deserve to have been sent to concentration camps because they are thieves and lazy and because they do not pay their electricity and live on the back of the state."⁴⁶²

Endorsement of the vocabulary, extermination mechanisms, and symbols of the Holocaust to threaten or terrify Roma. Occasionally, especially on the internet, threats, hate speech, and hate crimes endorse the vocabulary, symbols, or tools of the Samudaripen/Porrajomos without necessarily mentioning the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide per se. Such array of words includes "deportations", "gas chambers", "concentration camps", or "minefields." This happens in a context of little awareness about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in the SEE public sphere.

Thus, having insufficient or no knowledge at all about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide but referring to its vocabulary, symbols, and tools seems shocking and inconsistent at first glance. But in fact, this follows the logic of many other apparent paradoxes of oppression; denying or not knowing the truth about the Roma victims of the Holocaust goes hand in hand with transferring from one generation to another the unchallenged vocabulary, symbols, or extermination mechanisms of that same injustice to threaten, terrify, or disparage Roma.

The language of dehumanization, especially using words of the Nazi and fascist regimes, has been observed frequently. For example, in Serbia, Pisarri and Đuričić compiled a list of stereotypes, prejudices, biases, belittling jokes that blamed Roma people for their collective identity, which included often dehumanizing, even genocidal language. One of the examples they mentioned was the following: “Gypsies are good for nothing but a bullet and being thrown in quicklime. They serve no other purpose. They are outrageous pests and parasites; they are worse than the dirtiest rats. Not only are they polluting our country, but also our Serbian nation through racial mixing.”⁴⁶³ This comment is exemplary for the blatant racism, extreme dehumanization and genocidal language (comparison with parasites and a call for their annihilation) it employs, not only as a subtle reminiscence of the Nazi vocabulary but also often encountered as a red flag in other countries that have endured genocide.

Similarly, in Greece, we spotted examples using the racist racial logic of neo-Nazi rhetoric, including dehumanizing language. According to the Golden Dawn high-rank party members, the Roma are cast as inferiors that do not belong to “the civilization,” and they have to live in the wilderness as animals, or worst, they should be extinct as pests. In July 2013, during a gathering in Skala Lakonias, in Peloponissos, Ilias Kassidiaris, Golden Dawn MP, referred to the Roma as “pests” and then added that “all the good jobs are done in the night,” implying that they could get rid of them during night attacks.⁴⁶⁴ Subsequently, several attacks on Roma communities took place in Lakonia at the time.

Other comments made a more direct link to the extermination mechanisms of the Holocaust. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, usually, the articles about the commemorations of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide do not receive much attention from the users. And comments are sometimes supportive of human rights. However, some online comments that we identified encouraged solving the “problem” through expelling, evicting, or forcibly deporting Roma:

“Instead of expelling them from where they came from (...), he [the mayor] builds houses for them because they enrolled one in a million children in school.”

“Expel all Roma who came from Serbia and Croatia, ours [domestic Roma community] will have no problems.”

“It sounds ugly, but the only solution for them is forced deportation. Parasites pollute society, and they must be removed.”

“Beg less, stab teenagers less to steal their phone, take more baths, and then something can be done. If this is your CULTURE, then go back to India.”

“You will not succeed in civilizing them; you will only have to expel them and solve everyone’s problem.”

A similar distortion tactic was identified in Montenegro. A 2021 reportage, entitled *We Are Not Used to Being Confined*, discussed the Coronavirus lockdown and the fact that the National Coordination Body for Infectious Diseases ordered the Roma neighborhood Vrela Ribnička to be under strict lockdown and self-isolation

in April 2020, after a few cases were confirmed in the community.⁴⁶⁵ The reportage was shared on Facebook and had 211 reactions, 140 comments, and around 30 shares. Some of the comments used slurs and offensive name-calling, suggesting that Montenegro is not Roma's country and that Roma lived at taxpayers' expense. Furthermore, similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina, vocabulary alluding to the extermination mechanisms used during the Holocaust was used. For example, some commented that Roma should be "exiled to Kosovo* where they shall be treated as they deserve" and that Montenegrins "should electrocute" Roma through the protective fences installed in the neighborhoods. All those comments remained on the Facebook page of RTCG.⁴⁶⁶

In Romania, too, we identified outright hate speech, which employed opinions unapologetically reminiscent of wartime eugenic discourses that relegated Roma to subhuman categories and called for their urgent ghettoization:

"Wasn't it you who wanted to join Europe, and now you are the ones disgruntled because Europe tells us to embrace them and tolerate them because 'they are humans too' (...). If one could find the necessary will, the Gypsy problem would be solved in a few months by drawing up lists with anti-social gypsies, creating a few settlements operating under a special regime in the Greater Brăila Island, and when everything will be made ready, in 48 hours, under the operation codename 'the great rodent disinfection,' around 300,000 Gypsies will be rounded up from all over the country and be relocated in the Greater Brăila Island, in small towns surrounded by concrete walls and under armed guard, where the new inhabitants will support themselves by doing hard manual labor in the nearby fields or factories. Therefore, it is not solutions that we lack but people willing to put them into practice. (...)"⁴⁶⁷

And finally, Nazi symbols, primarily the swastika, sometimes along with anti-Roma messages, have been used to threaten Roma. In North Macedonia, in January 2017, swastikas and slogans "Death for Gypsies" and "Die Gypsies" were found on a wall of the primary school Gjorgji Sugarev in Bitola, where the majority (80%) of students are Roma.⁴⁶⁸

Demeaning the memory of the Samudaripen/Porraimos, its victims, and survivors, including by destroying or damaging Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide memorials, archives, and symbols. This form of distortion includes, amongst other actions, the destruction and vandalization of sites of memory, archives, and symbols, but also disturbance of ceremonies that honor and memorialize the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide with the intention of demeaning, obliterating, humiliating the memory of the Samudaripen/Porraimos, its victims, and survivors.

Vandalizing Holocaust or WWII monuments was also a common strategy by which nationalists and racists attacked and/or celebrated the legacy of the genocide, particularly in times of war. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, during the 1992-1995 war, the Kruščica memorial (site of detention of Serbs, Jews, and Roma during the Holocaust) was devastated and looted. But also, after 1995, parts of the Gornje Poljice memorial placed in a Roma neighborhood in Lukavac, near Tuzla, where Roma were massacred during the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, were destroyed.

We also identified cases where symbols of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide were vandalized. For instance, in 2021, a billboard located in the city of Novi Sad, Serbia, as part of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide commemoration campaign *Proud Roma Free Europe* was torn and defaced with neo-Nazi symbols.

Furthermore, other memorials related to the WWII period, but not necessarily to the Holocaust victims, have been vandalized. For example, in Greece, the Lamboussa memorial, which commemorates Vassilis Mitrou, a Roma, for his activity in the Resistance during the Occupation, was vandalized in 2018. The only part of the memorial that was vandalized was the bust of Vassilis Mitrou and the plate that mentioned its name, indicating a racial motivation for that act of vandalism.

Finally, some Roma archival documents have been destroyed over time. In Bulgaria, we identified a case when the computer system of the archive listed a certain document as being available, but when the researcher searched for the original document, it was missing. The archivists' explanation was that during the communist period in Bulgaria, the archivists destroyed some documents if they deemed them unimportant.

Mockery of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. This form of distortion is embodied by so-called jokes, comical stories, cartoons, and jests about the Roma victims of the Holocaust. Often, the mockery touches upon the actual extermination of the Roma. In 2022, in particular, the mockery of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has become more obvious to the European public, especially after comedian Jimmy Carr said on his Netflix show that “[w]hen people talk about the Holocaust, they talk about the tragedy of 6 million Jewish lives being lost to the Nazi war machine. But they never mention the thousands of Gypsies that were killed by the Nazis. (...) No one ever wants to talk about that, because no one ever wants to talk about the positives.”⁴⁶⁹

We identified similar forms of mockery in SEE. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an appalling example of mockery of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide was a recent Bosnian sitcom called *Mansion at Hilmija's*, a show similar to the British sitcom *'Allo,'Allo* from the 1980s.⁴⁷⁰ In *Mansion at Hilmija's*, one of the main characters is Durmiš, a Roma man who works as a waiter in Hilmija's mansion and imitates an Aryan in order to survive. He wears traditional Bosniak clothing, including the *fes* (headgear), and has a small mustache that resembles the mustache of Adolf Hitler. Every time he sees a Nazi officer, he freezes and greets him with the right-hand salute similar to the *Sieg Heil*.

The spread of mockery of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is highly favored by social media. For instance, in North Macedonia, in 2021, Romalitico analyzed public comments on Facebook and Twitter on different media portals.⁴⁷¹ Some of the comments included “jokes” about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, such as “at Auschwitz, Hitler goes and asks a gypsy: What do you want to be? And the child answers: Well, a football player or a pilot. And Hitler shouts: No, no, I meant soap or a leather jacket?”⁴⁷² Such cruel and outrageous “jokes” build on the wide-spread narrative that Hitler wanted to make soap and leather jackets using Roma bodies.

Deflection of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide to evade or deny national responsibility or complicity. This category of distortion consists of situations when historians, politicians, and public opinion evade or deny national responsibility for the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. The promoters of this form of distortion engage in creating perpetrator hierarchies, shifting the blame exclusively to the Nazi regime, and portraying the Germans as worse war criminals than the local Nazi allies to downplay the crimes and the role of local collaborators and blur responsibility. For instance, in Croatia, some authors have distorted historical facts by omitting parts of prisoners' testimonies to prove that the Germans treated the prisoners worse than the Ustaša regime.⁴⁷³ In Romania, a 2021 survey showed that 34 % of the respondents explained Marshal Antonescu's anti-Roma policies as the direct result of National Socialist influence.⁴⁷⁴ Yet, as the IHRA noted, "to assert that the Holocaust is not relevant to a nation's history because it was perpetrated by Nazi Germany could be a form of distortion because such an argument: a) ignores the roles played by local collaborators or members of the Axis in the crimes of the Holocaust and b) suggests that the legacies of the Holocaust did not influence postwar international norms and institutions."⁴⁷⁵

The knowledge of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has been subject to more categories of distortion, particularly on the Internet. In some countries, we also found abuse of historical facts and elements of the Holocaust, including historical negative revisionism of Roma killings. For instance, in Slovenia, some social science scholars distorted the historical fact that the fascist Hungarian occupiers killed six Roma hostages.⁴⁷⁶ The authors claimed that those Roma were "conscripts evading military service" as if their killing would be then justifiable: "6 Gypsies were shot as hostages by the Hungarians on February 27, 1945 in Turnišče. This can be deduced from the data published in the publication of the Roma Association of Slovenia entitled *Porajmos*. The statement that they were shot as hostages is not true. They were shot as conscripts evading military service." Yet, as Vita Zalar's research shows, on February 27, 1945, Hungarian troops shot "at least six Roma hostages," who were registered at the Institute of Contemporary History as part of the database *Deaths Among the Population in The Republic of Slovenia During and Immediately After the Second World War*. As Zalar underscores, "[t]wo of them were civilians, and three were deserters from the working battalion of the Hungarian army. A monument to Adolf and Jožef Baranja, shot hostages of 'Roma origin,' has been erected in Turnišče."⁴⁷⁷

In some cases, we also found examples of distortion by discrediting testimonies of camp survivors or dismissing them as "unreliable" or "inventions," fabricated by "impostors" and popularized by "occult international groups;" blaming the Allies bombing; or blaming the Roma for the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. For example, in Slovenia, some historians justified Roma executions by Partisan units by claiming that they were informants of the Italian army.

Knowing that these categories have been identified based exclusively on the experiences of Roma in SEE, additional and country and region-specific types of distortion and denial should constitute the subject of future research and policymaking. Moreover, the terms, the concepts, and the definitions discussed in this chapter are products of history and academic and political endeavors; they may be the subject of debate and change. Many still remain subjects of controversy and conceptual

and political differences. Yet, it is our responsibility – community representatives, leaders, academics, activists, politicians, diplomats - not to lose sight of the actual people and work together towards ensuring legal protections against denial and distortion and anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism and other forms of racism and dangerous *-isms*.

In the past few decades, States, Roma civil society organizations, and scholars have made valuable contributions to intensify the levels of awareness and knowledge about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in SEE. Across the region, Roma advocates have worked with States to ensure normative or ceremonial acknowledgment of August 2 or national memorial days of Samudaripen/Porrajmos. As a result, in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia, the State institutions have ensured lawful acknowledgment of memorial days. Similarly, in some countries in the region, for example, in Croatia and Romania, information about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has been included in history textbooks, although not always substantive or accurate. More research, archival fonds, and survivor testimonials regarding the plight of the Roma victims of the Holocaust are now available in the region, and visible progress has been made. However, there is still ample space to be explored and filled with research, expertise, and discussions about the multifaceted Holocaust history, and the place of Roma and Sinti experiences in its framework.

We wrote the following recommendations with the intention to generate constructive debates in different fora about the current level of awareness of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in the SEE public sphere. We also hope they will support State processes of acknowledgment, memorialization, commemoration, history teaching, and laws and policies to prevent denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. The proposals for the next steps forward draw on the needs and recommendations identified in the eleven countries included in this project.

History. Several positive steps have been undertaken in the process of creating understanding, awareness, and scholarship regarding the history of the Roma during the Holocaust and WWII in SEE. However, many research gaps remain and there is still a significant space for historians and other experts to address several aspects of this complex history in the years to come.

The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is still too often ignored or treated as a marginal topic in Holocaust and genocide studies, especially in those revolving around SEE. And archival research, oral history projects, and other research initiatives related to the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide, including projects exploring the plight of Roma women and LGBT people, lack serious attention, interest, and funding from academic and State institutions or intergovernmental bodies.

Thus, across the region, it is crucial to continue initiating, developing and supporting, through governmental and intergovernmental initiatives and appropriate funding, multi-year programs focusing on archival research and the oral history of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. Recording and safeguarding the stories of the few Roma survivors that are still alive is of utmost importance, considering the perpetual battle with the time. Testimonies, such as those included in our study, will enrich the knowledge production and the educational content and undertake the moral duty to memorialize Roma survivors' stories. Moreover, initiating or continuing systematic archival work, digitization, and dissemination of all archival materials related to the Samudaripen/Porraimos remain priorities in all the countries of the region. Additionally, in several countries included in this report, it is particularly pressing to document and collect information about gender-based violence and the local concentration camps and prisons during WWII, which, to date, have been disregarded in research and memorialization processes. Resource and documentation centers about or inclusive of the Samudaripen/Porraimos should be established across the region to raise awareness and enhance Holocaust education and memorialization.

Much of the history of WWII has been written through the lens of dominant groups who shaped the historical narrative in their societies. Hence, there is a need for stakeholders involved in research on Roma history to partner with Roma scholars and invest in strengthening the capacity and the academic skills of emerging Roma scholars. Scholars should initiate and receive support and funding from the governments and intergovernmental organizations like IHRA to embark on new interdisciplinary, cross-sectional research projects on the history of the Roma during the Holocaust and WWII. Furthermore, funding and sustainable support are necessary to train emerging scholars interested in pursuing archival research and developing digital archives focusing on Samudaripen/Porraimos. Finally, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide must be mainstreamed into the Holocaust and genocide studies to provide more inclusive resources and ensure a richer understanding of racialization and racism in the global scholarship.

Normative Acknowledgment, Memorialization, and History Teaching. The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide has often been treated as a peripheric theme in the processes and sites of Holocaust acknowledgment, memorialization, and commemoration, as well as in school curricula and textbooks. Memory activism on Samudaripen/Porraimos has emerged primarily within Roma and ally organizations and groups, especially in the form of advocacy for the normative acknowledgment and commemoration of August 2, the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, and other related memorial days.

Thus, it is important that all States ensure normative acknowledgment of August 2, the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, fund, and participate in commemoration events. In addition, we recommend States to work in partnership with Roma leaders and organizations to organize memorial days marking the genocide/ mass atrocities implemented within specific countries, as well as the suffering or resistance during WWII within those countries. For example, Roma leaders in Croatia recommend the declaration of May 19 as memorial day - the day when the entire repressive apparatus of the Ustaša Independent State of Croatia was launched in 1942 with the aim of bringing all Roma to the Jasenovac concentration camp.

Furthermore, State institutions, museums, IHRA, the UN, and other intergovernmental organizations and relevant stakeholders should consider more inclusive Holocaust resolutions, statements, and commemorative events, including on January 27. Remembering more consistently the other groups that were persecuted by the Nazis, such as the Roma, Afro-Germans, people with disabilities, and LGBT+ people would grant higher attention to the discrimination and exclusion mechanisms these groups still face in many European societies.

The memorialization of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide should become a priority for State institutions. In particular, States and the EU should erect dedicated sites of memory for the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide; establish Roma museums and include sections on the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in European, national, and local history museums; name streets, buildings, schools after Roma victims and heroes; and host permanent exhibitions dedicated to relevant periods in Roma history. This would ensure the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide is not only occasionally commemorated. It would also actively contribute to its institutionalization in the society by encouraging people of all backgrounds to become part of these memorialization activities and strengthen thus the social fabric of communities. Additionally, museums and documentation centers of the Holocaust should consider adding sections or information about the Roma history.

Study visits and exchanges of good practices are valuable educational tools. Thus, State institutions should provide regular funding to schools to organize educative trips to such sites of memory, including the Jasenovac Memorial Site or the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial. We encourage IHRA to support exchange and study visits for its members to learn about best practices regarding the history of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide at different museums, memorials, or institutions that address the topic of the Holocaust at the national and international levels. Furthermore, national institutions and international organizations should establish collaborations and generate more synergies to address the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and develop tools and materials that can support creating more awareness.

History education and truth-telling about the events of WWII and the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide constitute a moral obligation owed to Roma communities, and it is also a path to understand better national histories, historical injustices, and present-day anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism. Widespread and adequate Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide education is vital to preventing the spread of denial and distortion among the younger generations, and thus, an efficient atrocity prevention instrument.

Thus, history education and well-informed textbooks should be prioritized by the States. Across the region, both primary and secondary school curricula and textbooks ought to undergo systematic revisions to comprise accurate information about the Roma history, including the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. It is advisable to include more Roma historians in these processes granting thus access to resources accessible in Romani, enabling the participation of Roma voices in the writing process of their history, and also sharing responsibility for a qualitative teaching process. In addition, current and future educators should be trained adequately in the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide teaching by specialized institutions.

Furthermore, the history textbooks need to become more inclusive, considering more comprehensive information about the Holocaust, including the plight of Roma, Black Europeans, people with disabilities, and LGBT+.

Generally, the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide needs to be mainstreamed into Holocaust acknowledgment, memorialization, and history teaching.

Denial and Distortion. In examining the official narratives about the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in SEE, we encountered both hardcore and softcore denial, as well as distortion in many forms, including deliberate and unintentional omissions of historical facts, praise and rehabilitation of Nazi perpetrators and collaborationists, Nazi symbols, and mockery of the victims.

Thus, across the SEE region and beyond, there is a crucial need for conceptual, legal, and policy documents defining and addressing the denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide at the national and intergovernmental levels, including by IHRA and the UN.

Furthermore, there is also a need for laws or improvement of the existing legal framework to criminalize the denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide and regulations aiming to regularly monitor, sanction, and combat all manifestations of structural racism against Roma – many of them rooted in the dangerous distortion of the past. There is a need for robust laws, policies, and traditional and new media regulations that sanction and remove such forms of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide abuse from audio-visual programs, social media, and other public platforms. And governments should establish cross-sectoral working groups to address the denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide by backing up sanctions with targeted educational measures.

Academic centers, researchers, civil society organizations, and State institutions should contribute to developing evidence-based research to inform policies against denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide. Furthermore, State institutions, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, educational institutions, donor organizations, and other relevant stakeholders should develop efficient monitoring and reporting mechanisms and programs to document and prevent the denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide.

Awareness-raising activities are also mandatory. There is a need to raise awareness about Holocaust denial and distortion among institutions, policymakers and professionals, as well as the broader public, by developing training programs or materials, including for educators, researchers, civil society, and museums or memorial institutions. The general public also needs to be systematically informed about the realities of and the nexus between the Samudaripen/Porraimos history, racial and ethnic violence, anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism, and the detrimental effects of Holocaust denial and distortion. Therefore, there is also a stringent need to support civil society organizations, opinion makers, academics, artists, and informal groups to work against the denial and distortion of the Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide through community projects, art projects, and other activities.

The internet is a medium that is particularly utilized for distortion and denial. In line with the ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.15, as well as the Special Report to the UN Secretary-General on Freedom of Opinion and Expression A/HRC/38/35, and the Special Report to the UN Secretary-General on Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression A/74/486,⁴⁷⁸ human rights protection in an online environment should be ensured by implementing international human rights standards that apply in an offline environment. Thus, social media companies and audiovisual media (AMV) service providers should prevent and address Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion and hate speech, and discourses that incite to violence, racism, and xenophobia. States should develop monitoring mechanisms, design technologies and train and educate civil servants, judiciary, prosecution, law enforcement services, and media and providers of AVM services to implement such policies.

Overall, the topics of Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide denial and distortion need to be mainstreamed into existing national and intergovernmental legislations and policies that aim to combat Holocaust denial and distortion.

Narrowing the term Holocaust and the definitions of Holocaust denial and distortion to the Jewish victims would exclude the other categories of victims from protections against Holocaust denial and distortion, which have already been guaranteed by the UN and other intergovernmental body regulations; it would also exclude Roma and other victims from official efforts that aim to maintain the memory of the Holocaust, protect the remaining survivors, and repair the harm they experienced. The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide needs to be consistently included in the processes of Holocaust acknowledgment, memorialization, and history teaching to keep our moral promise of *Never Again*.

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Albania

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Kosovo*

Shpresa Agushi (Executive Director, NGO “Network of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Women”); Daut Qulangjiu (romani program editor at Radio Television of Kosovo-RTK); Edis Galushi (Artist and educator); Bashkim Ibishi (Executive Director, NGO “Advancing Together”); Korab Krasniqi (forumZFD); Arber Salihu (Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation - MESTI); Donika Xhemajli (Teacher’s History Association); Isak Skenderi (Executive Director, NGO “Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians”); Ridvan Gashi (Consultative Council for Communities); Nora Ahmetaj (Researcher on transitional justice); Vjollca Islami Hajrullahu (forumZFD); Shemsi Krasniqi (Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, Priština); Gazmend Rizaj (Professor of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, Priština).

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Institutional Partners

THE AUSCHWITZ INSTITUTE FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE AND MASS ATROCITIES

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) is building a world that prevents genocide and other mass atrocities. Since 2006, AIPG has been working on a global scale to apply the knowledge, experience, and research of the world's leading atrocity prevention experts to specialized education, training, and technical assistance programs for government officials to build State capacity for atrocity prevention - an approach that no other organization has taken in the field. More than a decade of expertise has allowed AIPG to operationalize the identification of critical risk factors for mass atrocity, as well as relevant policy response options, providing State officials with concrete frameworks to address warning signs before there is an outbreak of violence. AIPG has offices in New York (USA), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Kampala (Uganda), Oswieçim - the site of the former Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz (Poland), and in Bucharest (Romania). The Auschwitz Institute has trained, and provides ongoing support to over 9,000 experts and government officials from more than 90 countries around the world, empowering them with the necessary information, tools, and networking capacities to design, implement, and strengthen effective policies and programs to prevent genocide and other mass atrocities.

THE FRANÇOIS-XAVIER BAGNOUD CENTER FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University (FXB Center) is an interdisciplinary center that conducts rigorous investigation of the most serious threats to health and wellbeing globally. We work closely with scholars, students, the international policy community, and civil society to engage in ongoing strategic efforts to promote equity and dignity for those oppressed by grave poverty and stigma around the world. The FXB Center's Roma Program was established in 2012 with the goal of advancing research, pedagogy, and advocacy with and for Romani people. The Center has a particular focus on the realization of children's and youth rights and has incorporated the rights and participation of Romani children and adolescents as part of its research agenda. Our research, which forms the basis of our advocacy for the centralizing of Roma rights in policymaking and research, can be broken down into several main areas: a) explore the barriers and opportunities of Romani people, particularly children and adolescents, to benefit from equal rights, dignity, and respect; b) produce knowledge and advocacy opportunities for reparations for past and present state-sponsored injustice against Romani people; c) contribute research regarding Romani people in the Americas; d) contribute to the consolidation of the field of Critical Romani Studies. In our work with the Roma, we actively create connections to other communities of scholarship, whether it be those focused on dialogue about reparations for collective injustice; those implementing particular methodologies such as participatory action research; those exploring themes such as hate speech, stigma, or diasporas; those delving deeply important fields, such as minority studies; those bringing wider perspectives such as intersectionality; or those devoted to artistic expression in celebration and sorrow.

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63. Viorel Achim, ed., *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria [Documents Concerning the Deportation of the Gypsies in Transnistria]*, vol. 1, doc. no. 6, May 22, 1942, p. 10.
64. Martin Kuhar, *Eugenika u hrvatskoj medicini i njezin utjecaj na javnost u razdoblju od 1859. do 1945* [*Eugenics in Croatian Medicine and its Public Influence 1859-1945*], doctoral dissertation, School of Medicine, Zagreb, 2015, p. 158.
65. Vladimir Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena [Characterology of Yugoslavs]*, Belgrade, Prosveta, 2000, reprint from 1936, p. 243-244.
66. During the war, Milan Gjukić worked at the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, at the Department of Human Genetics and Eugenics.
67. Milan Gjukić, "Nekoliko riječi o principima eugenike (rasne higijene) i njenoj današnjoj praktičnoj primjeni" ["A Few Words on the Principles of Eugenics (Racial Hygiene) and its Current Practical Application"], *Liječnički vijesnik*, No. 11, Zagreb, 1942, p. 413-417.
68. Milan Gjukić, "Pitanje utjecaja težine mozga na inteligenciju" ["The Question of the Influence of Brain Weight on Intelligence"], *Liječnički vijesnik*, No. 1, Zagreb, 1944, p. 6-13.
69. Milan Gjukić, "Nekoliko riječi o principima eugenike (rasne higijene) i njenoj današnjoj praktičnoj primjeni" ["A Few Words on the Principles of Eugenics (Racial Hygiene) and its Current Practical Application"], *Liječnički vijesnik*, No. 11, Zagreb, 1942, p. 413-417.
70. Amila Kasumović, "Dvostruka drugost: Romi kao etnička manjina i marginalna grupa na prijelomu 19. i 20. stoljeća" ["Double Otherness: Roma as an Ethnic Minority and a Marginal Group at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries"] in *Historijski pogled na razvoj i položaj nacionalnih manjina u Sarajevu i Bosni i Hercegovini*, Udruženje za modernu historiju, 2017, p. 41.
71. Amila Kasumović, "Dvostruka drugost: Romi kao etnička manjina i marginalna grupa na prijelomu 19. i 20. stoljeća" ["Double Otherness: Roma as an Ethnic Minority and a Marginal Group at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries"], p. 41.
72. Amila Kasumović, "Dvostruka drugost: Romi kao etnička manjina i marginalna grupa na prijelomu 19. i 20. stoljeća" ["Double Otherness: Roma as an Ethnic Minority and a Marginal Group at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries"], p. 41.
73. Hikmet Karčić, *Derviš M. Korkut: A Biography*, Sarajevo, Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks & El-Kalem, 2020, p. 49.
74. Hikmet Karčić, *Derviš M. Korkut: A Biography*, p. 50.
75. Sanja Gladanac-Petrović, Senior Researcher, University of Sarajevo Institute for History, interview by Edo Kanlić, October 6, 2021.
76. At the end of the 19th century, Roma were already classified as alleged cannibals, vagrants, thieves, and a plague for local communities. They were depicted as people who could not conceal their blood/ origins and stigmatized as those who transmit diseases between humans and animals in connection with accusations of carcass consumption. See also Trdina's assertions in Andrej Studen, *Neprilagojeni in nevarni: Podoba in status Ciganov v preteklosti [Maladjusted and Dangerous: Images and Status of Gypsies in the Past]*, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2015, p. 32-33, p. 59-60. Available at: https://www.sistory.si/cdn/publikacije/42001-43000/42039/razpoznavanja_23_2015.pdf.
77. Fran Ogrin was a lawyer who was also inspired by Hans Gross' criminology studies. In November 1918, he was appointed Head of the Kočevje District Government; from May 1920 to June 1921, he was with the National or Provincial Government in Ljubljana (then part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), and then, District Chief in Kočevje. Gorazd Stariha points out that it would be interesting to know Fran Ogrin's post-war fate, given his pre-war flirtation with fascist and Nazi methods, especially regarding Roma. Gorazd Stariha, "'Z nobenim delom se ne pečajo, le z lažnivo beračijo!': odgon kot institucija odvračanja nezaželenih" ["The Only Thing They Turn Their Hands to is False Beggary!': Forcible Removal as an Institution for Determent of the Undesirables"], *Zgodovina za vse*, 14, no. 1, 2007, p. 37-76. Available at: <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC:TJO19W7C>; Karel Bačar, *Ogrin, Fran (1880-1958)*, *Obrazi slovenskih pokrajin*, Mestna knjižnica Kranj, 2020.
78. Fran Ogrin, "Beračenje, potepanje in ciganstvo v socialni in pravni obleki" ["Beggings, Wandering and Gypsiness in Social and Legal Attire"], *Glasilo županske zveze v Ljubljani*, IV, 8-9, No. 36, p. 93-97, p. 96.
79. Fran Ogrin, "Beračenje, potepanje in ciganstvo v socialni in pravni obleki" ["Beggings, Wandering and Gypsiness in Social and Legal Attire"], *Glasilo županske zveze v Ljubljani*, IV, 8-9, no. 36, 93-97, p. 95.

- 80.** Tihomir Đorđević, "Fizičke i duševne osobine Cigana" ["Physical and Mental Characteristics of the Gypsies"], *Srpski književni glasnik*, no. 3, 1904, p. 47-48.
- 81.** Vladimir Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* [Characterology of Yugoslavs], Belgrade, Prosveta, 2000, reprint from 1936.
- 82.** Kostas Biris, *The Gypsies. Folklore and Ethnological Study*, Vivliopoleio tis Estias Ioannou D. Kollarou, 1942.
- 83.** Kostas Biris, *The Gypsies. Folklore and Ethnological Study*, p. 10.
- 84.** Christian Promitzer, "Typhus, Turks, and Roma: Hygiene and ethnic difference in Bulgaria, 1912-1944," in Christian Promitzer et al., eds., *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945*, CEU Press, 2011, p. 121.
- 85.** "Ciganska zalega" ["Gypsy Spawn"], *Slovenski narod*, August 17, 1938. Available at: <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-BAHI6V80>; "Iz Škofje Loke" ["From Škofja Loka"], *Slovenski narod*, February 5, 1938. Available at: <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-WOIO7RCM>; "Zigeunerin köpft ihren Mann" ["Gypsy Woman Beheads her Husband"], *Marburger Zeitung*, July 1, 1938. Available at: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-WJFRBC6Z/0e5c6d84-25a8-41fc-9be2-aae8d701e408/PDF>; "Giftmord aus Eifersucht" ["Poisoning out of Jealousy"], *Marburger Zeitung*, July 23, 1938. Available at: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-SELYFUL6/c65bf032-ac1a-4b8c-8ff0-71d8a42a3653/PDF>; <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-EQ4C8T98>.
- 86.** "Kruho maščevanje" ["The Cruel Revenge"], *Slovenec*, February 23, 1938. Available at: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-5RT34JN2/4e186a5a-5849-4e98-be48-8bbf9264d5b/PDF>.
- 87.** "Cigane treba poslani na prisilan rad, da budu od korisiti" ["Gypsies should be sent into forced labor to be of use"], *Jutarnji list*, V 9th 1933, br. 7641, p. 8.
- 88.** Danijel Vojak, *Stradanje Roma u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj 1941 - 1945* [Roma Suffering in the Independent State of Croatia], IDZ 'Ivo Pilar' and Roma National Council, Zagreb, 2015, p. 26-27.
- 89.** Valtazar Bogišić, "Slavenizirani Cigani u Crnoj Gori" ["Slavicized Roma in Montenegro"], p. 251-252. Bogišić illustrates this with the case of two Montenegrin women who married wealthy Roma men. The priest, not finding any legal objection, married them. However, they regretted their marriage as people referred to them as "Ciganke" and asked for a divorce. The metropolitan found their reasons to be unfounded and rejected their request. According to the Canon, the metropolitan was the only entitled to grant a divorce.
- 90.** The tribal organization in Montenegro resembles the one of the Scottish clans. It is based on communal bonds and regularly appeared as socio-political rather than kin-like structure. Tribal consciousness was preserved until the 20th century. Nowadays, it is seen as a social phenomenon that is kept on the cultural and not political level. Tribes are made of fraternities that inhabit several villages or one village as a collective. Thus tribes are seen as territorial and administrative organizations. They usually share the same name or the tradition of common origin. They are bound by the common property, which is jointly protected by all members of the tribe, meaning that the tribal organization is a consequence of an economic necessity.
- 91.** The councilor stated that "[...] the gypsy problem, given their quick reproduction, as well as endangering others' property, is the most important social issue for the village. Its solution would eliminate or mitigate many social evils which worry today Ban's government and other factors of social providing... This measure would surely contribute to the success of other governmental measures: suppressing vagrancy (wandering), suppressing criminality and immorality, suppressing contagious diseases and raising hygienic living conditions for individuals and society, due to suppressing pestilence in livestock, and begging. Besides that, it would enable lower expenses for treating the gypsies, for free outpatient treatment, as it is known that gypsies are frequent patients of such free treatments."
- 92.** Bjelovar District Council, Peasant House, April 3, 1941, No. 14, p. 6, cited in Danijel Vojak, *U predvečerje rata: Romi u Hrvatskoj 1918-1941* [In the Eve of War: Roma in Croatia 1918 - 1941], Zagreb, 2013, p. 114-115.
- 93.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtorja e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Shkodër, Prefektura [Prefecture of Shkodra], *Cashija e gabelëve* [The issue of Roma/Gabe], Protocol number 7189/1, Shkodër, June 26, 1920, "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtorja e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Shkodër, Prefektura [Prefecture of Shkodra], Protocol number 1373, Shkodër, July 1, 1920, "Correspondence letter", p.1.
- Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtorja e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Nënprefektura Sarandë [Subprefecture of Saranda], Sarandë, April 11, 1935, "Correspondence letter", p.1.
- Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtorja e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Prefektura e Beratit [Prefecture of Berati], Protocol number 1222/38, Berat, October 9, 1942, "Correspondence letter", p.1.
- Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtorja e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Bashkia e Kavajës [Municipality of Kavaja], Protocol 535/1, Kavajë, July 15, 1929, "Correspondence letter", p.1.
- 94.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtorja e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Mretnija Shqiptare Prefektura e Beratit [Kingdom of Albania, Prefecture of Berati], Protocol number 1222/38, Berat, October 9, 1942. "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 95.** Margareta Matache, Jennifer Leaning, Jacqueline Bhabha. "Hatred against Roma in Times of Pandemic," in Jocelyn Getgen Kestenbaum, Caitlin O. Mahoney, Amy E. Meade, Arlan F. Fuller eds., *Public Health, Mental Health, And Mass Atrocity Prevention*, p. 89-109.
- 96.** Christian Promitzer, "Typhus, Turks, and Roma: Hygiene and ethnic difference in Bulgaria, 1912-1944," p. 108.
- 97.** Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, Columbia University Press, 1944.
- 98.** United Nations, *The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml>.
- 99.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 8.
- 100.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 16.
- 101.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 45.
- 102.** Robert D. Kaplan, "The Antonescu Paradox", *Foreign Policy*, 2016. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/05/the-antonescu-paradox-romania-world-war-ii-hitler/>.
- 103.** Viorel Achim, ed., *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria* [Documents Concerning the
- Deportation of the Gypsies in Transnistria*], vol. 1, doc. no. 3, 5-6; ANR, fond IGJ, file 126/1942, May 17, 1942, p. 204-205.
- 104.** Radu Ioanid et al., eds., *Final Report. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, Polirom, 2004, p. 227. Available at: http://www.inshr-ew.ro/ro/files/Raport%20Final/Final_Report.pdf.
- 105.** Vladimir Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii. Dislocări forțate de populație și epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu, 1940-1944* [published in English as *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*], p. 141, 266, 297.
- 106.** Viorel Achim, ed., *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria* [Documents Concerning the Deportation of the Gypsies in Transnistria], doc. no. 179, October 9, 1942, p. 269-270.
- 107.** ANR, fond IGJ, file 126/1942, p. 204-205.
- 108.** These were Ukrainian villages in which most, if not all, native Ukrainian villagers had been removed or evicted by force by the new Romanian administration.
- 109.** Brigitte Mihok, "Transferul unilateral: deportarea romilor români" ["The Unilateral Transfer: the Deportation of Romanian Roma"] in Wolfgang Benz, Brigitte Mihok, eds., *Holocaust la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în România și Transnistria în 1940-1944* [Holocaust at the Periphery. Persecution and Annihilation of the Jews in Romania and Transnistria in 1940-1944], Cartier, 2010, p. 283.
- 110.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*.
- 111.** Radu Ioanid et al., eds., *Final Report. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, p. 232.
- 112.** Viorel Achim, *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria* [Documents Concerning the Deportation of the Gypsies in Transnistria], vol. 2, doc. no. 375, May 10, 1943. Radu Ioanid et al., eds., *Final Report. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, p. 235- 236.
- 113.** Jean Ancel, "Tragedia romilor și tragedia evreilor din România: asemănări și deosebiri" ["The Roma and Jewish Plights in Romania: Similarities and Differences"], in Luminița Mihai Cioabă, ed., *Lacrimi române* [Roma Tears], Ro Media, 2006, p. 30.
- 114.** Viorel Achim, *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria* [Documents Concerning the Deportation of the Gypsies in Transnistria], vol. 1, p. xx. Radu Ioanid et al., eds., *Final Report. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, p. 235-236.
- 115.** These regions were part of Horthy's Hungary.
- 116.** Iva Merheim Eyre, Bojan Aleksov et al., *Antisemitic Discourse in the Western Balkans: A Collection of Case Studies*, International Republican Institute, 2021, p.77. Available at: <https://www.iri.org/resources/antisemitism-remains-a-key-obstacle-to-democratic-transition-in-western-balkans/>.
- 117.** *Zakonska odredba o rasnoj pripadnosti*, [Legal Provision on Racial Affiliation], April 30, 1941, NN No. 16/1941.
- 118.** *Zakonska odredba o zaštiti arijevske krvi i časti hrvatskog naroda* [Legal Provision on the Protection of Arian Blood and Honor of Croatian People], April 30, 1941, NN No. 16/1941.
- 119.** *Naredba o ustrojstvu djelokruga rada rasnopoličkog povjerenstva*, [Order on the Constitution of the Scope of Racial-Political Committee], June 4, 1941, NN No. 43/1941.

- 120.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*.
- 121.** Croatian State Archive, Independent State of Croatia Ministry of Internal Affairs, sign. HR-HDA-223, box. 1, No. 2007/45.
- 122.** Narcisa Lengel-Krizman, *Genocid nad Romima Jasenovac 1942*. [Roma Genocide Jasenovac 1942], Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, 2003, p. 40-41; Adam Dupalo, *Banija i Sisak u NOP-u 1941: događaji, svjedočanstva, dokumenti* [Banija and Sisak in NOP 1941: Events, Testimonies, Documents], Zagreb, 2014, p. 71, 218-219, 262; Dušan Baić, *Kotar Vrginmost u NO borbi: 1941-1945* [District Vrginmost in NO fight: 1941-1945], Vrginmost, 1980, p. 262, 445-446, 597-599, 857; Božo Vukobratović, "Teror i zločini fašističkih okupatora i njihovih pomagača na Kordunu 1941" ["Terror and Crimes of Fascist Occupation and Their Facilitators in Kordun 1941"], in Dušan Čalić, ed., *Simpozij o Petrovoj gori: u povodu 25-godišnjice III zasjedanja ZAVNOH-a, Topusko, 10. - 13. studenog 1969* [Petrova Gora Symposium in the Occasion of the 25th anniversary of III ZAVNOH Meeting, Topusko, November 10-13, 1969], Zagreb, 1972, p. 360; Bogdanka Romčević, "Žrtve fašističkog terora i rata s područja kotara Vojnići 1941-1945" ["Victims of Fascist Terror in District Vojnići 1941-1945"] in Đuro Zatezalo, ed., *Kotar Vojnići u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu i socijalističkoj revoluciji* [District Vojnići in the National-Liberation Revolution and Socialist Revolution], Karlovac, 1989, p. 1276-1279.
- 123.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 59.
- 124.** Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević, "Sjećanja veterinarara Zorke Golub na trinaest dana boravka u logoru Jasenovac 1942. godine" ["Memories of Veteran Zorko Golub Thirteen Days Spent in Jasenovac Camp in 1942"], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, No. 2., 1983, p. 166.
- 125.** Dragoljub Acković, *Ubili su istinu u nama* [They Killed the Truth in Us], Rominterpress, 2001, p. 89.
- 126.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 58.
- 127.** Anna-Maria Grundfelder, *U radni stroj velikoga njemačkog Reicha!* [Into the Working Machine of the Great German Reich!], Srednja Europa, 2007, p. 33.
- 128.** Milan Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida* [Ustaša Crimes of Genocide], IRO "RAD", 1986, p. 100, 107, 113, 118-119, 120, 125, 128.
- 129.** Vladimir Žerjavić and Dragan Cvetković cited in Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 57.
- 130.** Gazi Husrev-bey Library, Archives of the Islamic Community, R-VIS-549/1941.
- 131.** Emily Greble, *Sarajevo, 1941-1945: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Hitler's Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 92.
- 132.** This document was part of the exhibition *Samudariphe - Stradanje Roma u drugom svjetskom ratu*, [Samudariphe - Suffering of Roma in the Second World War], held at the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008.
- 133.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 519.
- 134.** "Veliko Županiji Vrhbosne Sarajevo" ["To the Great Parish Vrhbosna Sarajevo"], dated July 17, 1941. This document is part of the exhibition *Samudariphe - Stradanje Roma u drugom svjetskom ratu* [Samudariphe - Suffering of Roma in the Second World War]; Kotar Rogatica, Velikom Županu, Podatke o ciganima [District Rogatica, To the Grand Župan, Data on Gypsies]; dated July 15, 1941. This document is part of the exhibition *Samudariphe - Stradanje Roma u drugom svjetskom ratu* [Samudariphe - Suffering of Roma in the Second World War]; Kotarska oblast Čajniče u Goraždu [The County Administration of Čajniče in Goražde], "Predmet: Popis Cigana" ["Subject: List of Gypsies"], no: 464/41, dated August 28, 1941. This document is part of the exhibition *Samudariphe - Stradanje Roma u drugom svjetskom ratu* [Samudariphe - Suffering of Roma in the Second World War].
- 135.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 524.
- 136.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 524.
- 137.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 527.
- 138.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 527.
- 139.** Smail Galijašević in Amir Brka, *Nisim Albahari: Tragični revolucionar* [A Tragic Revolutionary], Centar za kulturu i obrazovanje Tešanj, 2018, p. 135.
- 140.** Municipal authority in Prnjavor, "Subject: Arrest of Jews and Gypsies"; no. 10/42, 31 August 1942. This document is part of the exhibition *Samudariphe - Stradanje Roma u drugom svjetskom ratu* [Samudariphe - Suffering of Roma in the Second World War].
- 141.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 535.
- 142.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 536.
- 143.** Vladimir Geiger, Brojdbeni pokazatelji o žrtvama logora Jasenovac, 1941.-1945. (procjene, izračuni, popisi), [Numerical Indicators on the Victims of the Jasenovac Camp, 1941-1945 (Estimates, Calculations, Censuses)], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 45, 2, 2013, p. 211-242.
- 144.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 536.
- 145.** Senija Milišić, "Stradanje Roma prema Zemaljskoj komisiji za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1944-1947)" ["The Suffering of Roma According to the State Commission to Investigate Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1944-1947)"], *Arhivska praksa*, p. 536.
- 146.** Without the territory of Kosovo*.
- 147.** Zlata Vuksanović Macura, "Istorija čuburskih romskih enklava" ["History of the Roma Settlements in Čubura"], *Godišnjak grada Beograda*, no. 61/62 (2014), p. 157-186.
- 148.** Tihomir Đorđević, "Fizičke i duševne osobine Cigana" ["Physical and Mental Characteristics of the Gypsies"], p. 48.
- 149.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, 2011.
- 150.** Milovan Pisarri, *Notes on the History of the Topovske Šupe Camp*. Available at: https://topovskesupe.rs/en/o_logoru/.
- 151.** Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 82.
- 152.** Milan Koljanin, *Nemački logor na beogradskom sajmištu 1941-1944* [The German Camp at the Belgrade Trade Fair Grounds], Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1992, p. 98-106.
- 153.** Council of Europe, *Roma Genocide: Serbia*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-genocide/serbia#Recognition>.
- 154.** Ivana Nikolić, "Serbia's Forgotten Role in the Roma Holocaust", *BIRN*, December 17, 2018. Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/12/17/serbia-s-forgotten-role-in-the-roma-holocaust-12-14-2018/>.
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- 156.** Milovan Pisarri, *The Suffering of the Roma during the Holocaust*, FPI, 2014, p. 103-109.
- 157.** Milovan Pisarri, *The Suffering of the Roma during the Holocaust*, p. 148-149.
- 158.** Milovan Pisarri, Nada Banjanin Đuričić et al., *Džanes ko sem? (Do you know who I am?). Educational materials about the genocide against the Roma during World War II and antigypsism in Serbia*, Center for Holocaust Research and Education, 2018, p.42. Available at: <https://www.cpi.rs/media/publications/Dzanes-ko-sem-EN-WEB-S6s.pdf.pdf>.
- 159.** Bajram Haliti, Professor and Dr. of Philosophy and Sociology, interview by Milovan Pisarri, Belgrade, February 18, 2022.
- 160.** Milovan Pisarri, *The Suffering of the Roma during the Holocaust*, p. 156.
- 161.** Milan Ristović, "The Persecuted and their Abettors: Solidarity and Help for the Jews in Serbia 1941-1945" cited in Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, p. 83.
- 162.** Tadeja Tominšek Čehulić, "Druga svetovna vojna in njene posledice za Belokranjce (1941-1945)" ["World War II and its Consequences for the People of Bela Krajina (1941-1945)"], *Kronika* 58, 2010, 859-874. Available at: <https://kronika.zzds.si/kronika/article/view/430/683>.

- 163.** Marjan Toš, "Genocid nad Romi – pozabljeni holokavst" ["Roma Genocide – the Forgotten Holocaust"], in Ursula Glaeser et al., *ROMI v gibanju* [Roma on the move], Center judovske kulturne dediščine Sinagoga, 2013, 39–50, p. 50. Available at: <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:doc-GZSTOZ4P>; Andrej Studen, *Neprilagojeni in nevarni: Podoba in status Ciganov v preteklosti* [Maladjusted and Dangerous: Images and Status of Gypsies in the Past], p. 176.
- 164.** According to Diricchardi, the majority of these victims of transportation and imprisonment were Sinti.
- 165.** Vita Zalar, Researcher and Assistant at the ZRC SAZU - Institute for Cultural History, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, August 19, 2021.
- 166.** Gorenjski muzej [The Gorenjska Museum], *Begunjske knjige na spletu* [The Begunje Prison Books Online]. Available at: <https://www.gorenjski-muzej.si/begunjske-knjige-na-spletu/?lang=en>.
- 167.** Vita Zalar, Researcher and Assistant at the ZRC SAZU - Institute for Cultural History, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, August 19, 2021; Miran Komac, "Pobijanje Ciganov med drugo svetovno vojno v Sloveniji" ["Mass Killings of Gypsies during World War II in Slovenia"], p. 216-239.
- 168.** Alenka Janko Spreizer, "Le rôle de la romologie dans la production de la mémoire collective des Roms" ["The Role of Romology in the Production of the Collective Memory of the Roma"], in Patrick Vauday et al., eds., *Histoire de l'oubli en contextes postsocialiste et postcolonial* [History of Oblivion in Post-socialist and Postcolonial Contexts] = *Zgodovina pozabe v postsocialističnem in postkolonialističnem kontekstu*, Université de Primorska, Centre de recherches scientifiques, Maison d'édition Annales: Société d'histoire de Primorska Sud, 2009, p. 118.
- 169.** AS 1830, Prijavnica za vstop v OF Slovenije v Beogradu [Application form for entry into the OF Slovenia in Belgrade].
- 170.** Vita Zalar, *Romi in Sinti na Slovenskem med drugo svetovno vojno. Diplomsko delo* [Roma and Sinti in Slovenia during the Second World War (B.A. thesis)], Univerza v Ljubljani, 2015, p. 60. Available at: https://www.sistory.si/cdn/publikacije/44001-45000/44139/Vita%20Zalar%20%28B.A.%20thesis%29%20Romi%20in%20Sinti%20na%20Slovenskem%20med%20drugo%20svetovno%20vojno_27.9.2015_final%20version.pdf; Andrej Studen, *Neprilagojeni in nevarni: Podoba in status Ciganov v preteklosti* [Maladjusted and Dangerous: Images and Status of Gypsies in the Past], p. 176; Jožek Horvat Muc, Dragoljub, Ackovič, and Rajko Djurič, *Porajmos*, Romani Union, 2015, p. 32-33; Marija Kovač Zupančič and Linka Ksela, *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, Obzorja, 1982; Ursula Glaeser et al., *Romi v gibanju* [Roma on the Move]; Boris Hajdinjak, "Tu se je smrt utrudila do smrti ...": *Slovenske žrtve Auschwitza (katalog razstave)* ["Here is where death worked itself to death ...": *Slovenian victims of Auschwitz (exhibition catalogue)*], Center judovske kulturne dediščine Sinagoga Maribor, 2020, p. 57; Boris Hajdinjak, Director of the Maribor Synagogue, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Maribor, October 19, 2021.
- 171.** Vita Zalar, *Romi in Sinti na Slovenskem med drugo svetovno vojno. Diplomsko delo* [Roma and Sinti in Slovenia during the Second World War (B.A. thesis)], 2015.
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- 173.** Renato Podbersič, "Žrtve revolucije med Romi na Slovenskem" ["Victims of the Revolution among the Roma in Slovenia"], in Mateja Čoh Kladnik, ed., *Revolucionarno nasilje, sodni procesi in kultura spominjanja: zbornik prispevkov z znanstvenega posveta (Zbirka Totalitarizmi – vprašanja in izzivi, 4)* [Revolutionary Violence, Trials and the Culture of Remembrance: Proceedings of a Scientific Conference (Collection Totalitarianisms - Questions and Challenges, 4)], Študijski center za narodno spravo, 2014, 78–94, p. 81; Marjan Toš, "Genocid nad Romi – pozabljeni holokavst" ["Roma Genocide – the Forgotten Holocaust"], in Ursula Glaeser et al., *Romi v gibanju* [Roma on the move], p. 39–50, p. 42; Andrej Studen, *Neprilagojeni in nevarni: Podoba in status Ciganov v preteklosti* [Maladjusted and Dangerous: Images and Status of Gypsies in the Past], Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2015, p. 175. Available at: https://www.sistory.si/cdn/publikacije/42001-43000/42039/razpoznvanja_23_2015.pdf.
- 174.** Marjan Toš, "Genocid nad Romi – pozabljeni holokavst" ["Roma Genocide – the Forgotten Holocaust"], p. 49.
- 175.** Marjan Toš, "Genocid nad Romi – pozabljeni holokavst" ["Roma Genocide – the Forgotten Holocaust"], p. 49.
- 176.** Vita Zalar, *Romi in Sinti na Slovenskem med drugo svetovno vojno. Diplomsko delo* [Roma and Sinti in Slovenia during the Second World War (B.A. thesis)], 2015, p. 46–48.
- 177.** Jožek Horvat Muc, Dragoljub Ackovič, and Rajko Djurič, *Porajmos*, 2015.
- 178.** Ferdo Gestrin, *Svet pod Krimom* [The World under the Krim], Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 1993, p. 69.
- 179.** Miran Komac, "Pobijanje Ciganov med drugo svetovno vojno v Sloveniji" ["Mass Killings of Gypsies during World War II in Slovenia"], p. 226.
- 180.** Tominšek Čehulič, Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, October 4, 2021; Vita Zalar, Researcher at the ZRC SAZU, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, August 19, 2021.
- 181.** Vita Zalar, Researcher at the ZRC SAZU, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, August 19, 2021.
- 182.** Vita Zalar, Researcher at the ZRC SAZU, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, August 19, 2021.
- 183.** The topic of Roma LGBTIQ+ was addressed once by the Romani radio broadcast *Naše poti* [Our pathways]. The journalist was reporting about a Council of Europe - meeting of the LGBTIQ+ activists. Available at: <https://radioprv.rtvoslo.si/2017/06/nase-poti-109/>.
- 184.** Andrej Studen, *Neprilagojeni in nevarni: Podoba in status Ciganov v preteklosti* [Maladjusted and Dangerous: Images and Status of Gypsies in the Past], p. 180.
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- 199.** Julia Hajdu, *The Roma and the Holocaust of World War II*. Available at: <https://holocaust.projects.history.ucsb.edu/Research/Proseminar/romaholocaust.htm>.
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- 245.** Pantelis Athanasiadis, "The Curse of the Deadly Smallpox in Occupied Didymoteicho." Available at: sitalkissing.blogspot.com, https://sitalkissing.blogspot.com/2016/09/blog-post_25.html.
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- 247.** One who acts according to Besa is someone who keeps his word, someone to whom one can trust one's life and the lives of one's family.
- 248.** Iva Merheim Eyre, Bojan Aleksov et al., *Antisemitic Discourse in the Western Balkans: A Collection of Case Studies*, p. 39.
- 249.** On April 9, 1939, the Albanian king, **Zog I** fled to Greece. Although Albania had been a de facto Italian protectorate since 1927, Italy's political leader, **Benito Mussolini** wanted direct control over the country to increase his and Italy's prestige to provide a response to Germany's **annexation of Austria** and occupation of **Czechoslovakia**, and to have firm control over Albania to station large forces of the Italian military for future operations involving Yugoslavia and Greece.
- 250.** There are two reasons why Roma were not deported: a) Roma participated as Partisans in the Albanian Army to protect the country; and b) the "Albanian Besa" was a traditional law which stated that no one would betray anyone who is on Albanian territory. Council of Europe, *Albanian Informal Material*, Available at: <https://bit.ly/3zY16n>.
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- 252.** Emiliano Aliu, Executive Director, Roma Versitas Albania, interview by Ram Hadroj, Tirana, October 6, 2021.
- 253.** In an interview with Mrs. Erinda Ballanca, the current Albanian Ombudsperson, she mentioned that her son told her about the Roma Holocaust. She also stated that the Roma Holocaust should receive attention from Roma people in the first place, especially from the civil society, in the same way that the Jewish Holocaust receives attention from the Israeli Embassy and other organizations. Erinda Ballanca, Albanian Ombudsperson, interview by Ram Hadroj, Tirana, October 19, 2021.
- 254.** Erion Xhaibra, Roma representative at the State Committee for Minorities, Tirana, interview by Ram Hadroj, September 29, 2021.
- 255.** For instance, a document issued by the Ministry of Interior for the Border Police Stations in 1939 stated that all Jewish people in Albania should be registered as Albanians.
- 256.** Mekuli Press, *Hebrenjtë në Shqipëri gjatë luftës së dytë botërore [The Jews in Albania During the Second World War]*, January 27, 2019.
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- 259.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Mbretëria Shqiptare Ministria e punëve të Mbrendshme, [Kingdom of Albania, The Ministry of Interior Affairs], Protocol number 5060, Tiranë, July 15, 1929, "Correspondence letter," p. 1.

- 260.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Bashkia e Kavajës [Municipality of Kavaja], Protocol number 629/1.4, Kavajë, July 10, 1929, "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 261.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Mbretëria Shqiptare Bashkia Elbasan, [Kingdom of Albania Municipality of Elbasan], *Ndalimi doganor - Zyrtar Policore [Custom check - Police Office]*, Protocol number 69/2831, Elbasan, September 21, 1934. "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 262.** In another letter sent to the Prime Minister of Albania, some citizens expressed their concern about the Roma people and labeled them as "Gabel." They claimed that the Roma community's so-called behaviors are non-human, and against Albanian culture, traditions, and honor, but they did not specify any of these behaviors in detail. The letter required the removal of the Roma community from the area where they lived in two small villages, Shijak and Sukth. Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Drejtoria P.Reformes Agrare [Directorate of Agrarian Reform], Protocol number 809-U, April 11, 1935, "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 263.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Kryesia e kabinetit, [The Head of Cabinet], Protocol number 809, Tirane, April 11, 1935, "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 264.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Nënprefektura Sarandë [Subprefecture of Saranda], C, Sarandë, April 11, 1935, "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 265.** Arkivi qëndror shtetëror - Dejtoria e përgjithshme e arkivave [Central State Archive - General Directorate of Archives], Bashkia Kavajë [Municipality of Kavaja], Kavajë, December 18, 1930, "Correspondence letter", p. 1.
- 266.** Regula Ludi, *Reparations for Nazi Victims in Postwar Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 1.
- 267.** Sabine Marschall, "The Memory of Trauma and Resistance: Public Memorialization and Democracy in Post-apartheid South Africa and Beyond," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, Vol. 11, No 4, October 2010, p. 361-381, p. 362.
- 268.** Rainer Schulze, "Unheard Voices: Roma and the Kosovo War," *Culture*, No. 5, 2014, p. 131-140.
- 269.** Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, Nr. 26, Special Issue Memory and Counter-Memory, Spring, 1989, p. 7-24, p. 9.
- 270.** Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," p. 12.
- 271.** The EP and others have chosen August 2 because "23 000 Roma were gassed to death in the Zigeunerlager (Gypsy camp) of Auschwitz-Birkenau during World War II and in one night, from 2 to 3 August 1944, 2 897 Roma, mostly women, children and elderly people, were killed at that camp; therefore, August 2 has been chosen by Roma organizations as the day to commemorate all Roma victims of this genocide"; See European Parliament, *European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on the occasion of International Roma Day - anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II*.
- 272.** European Parliament, *Resolution International Roma Day - anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU Recognition of the Memorial Day of the Roma Genocide during WW II*, 2015. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0095_EN.html.
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- 279.** "Comunicat de presă (22 octombrie 2007). REF: Ceremonie de decorare a etnicilor romi supraviețuitori ai Holocaustului" ["Press release (October 22, 2007). Re: Roma Holocaust Survivors Awarded During Official Ceremony"]. Available at: http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?RID=det&tb=date_arhiva&id=9708&PRID=arh.
- 280.** Parlamentul României [Parliament of Romania], "Legea nr. 124/2020 pentru instituirea zilei de 2 august ca Ziua națională de comemorare a Holocaustului împotriva romilor - Samudaripen" ["Law no. 14/2020 for the Establishment of the Date of August 2 as a National Commemoration Day for the Holocaust Against the Roma - Samudaripen"], *Monitorul Oficial al României [The Romanian Official Gazette]*, Part. I, No. 610, July 10, 2020.
- 281.** Archives of the National Roma Council.
- 282.** Phonogram of the discussion, Assembly IX, Meeting 3, Croatian Parliament, Information-documentation service, research and network information, May 31, 2017, p. 2/19.
- 283.** Lule Nikolić, Roma activist and President of Roma National Council, interview by David Dragoljub Orlović, Zagreb, December, 2021.
- 284.** Two of the interviewees confirmed, that the recommendation to proclaim August 2 as the "European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day/International Holocaust Remembrance Day" was proposed by the Roma community. Ribij Orel [pseudonym], Anonymous citizen, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, December 23, 2021; Vera Klopčič, Expert in minority laws, Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, Member of the Committee of Experts for the Supervision of the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Member of the Slovene national delegation at the IHRA and Honorary Member of the Association of Roma in Slovenia, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, October 19, 2021.
- 285.** Saliha Đuderija, Assistant Minister of Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina, interview by Edo Kanlić and Amra Karčić, September 24, 2021.
- 286.** The Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Ustaša Crimes - Genocide in the Jasenovac Concentration Camp and its Largest Execution Site in Donja Gradina is commemorating the breakthrough of the last prisoners of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp on April 22, 1945. The ceremony is held on a Sunday on different dates during the last week of April - first half of May.
- 287.** Dervo Sejdić, Vice President of NGO Kali Sara Roma Information Center, interview by Hikmet Karčić and Edo Kanlić, September 19, 2021.
- 288.** Andreas Huyssen, "Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, Volume 6, no. 2, January 1993, p. 255.
- 289.** United Nations General Assembly, *Human Rights Council, Twenty-fifth Session, Agenda item 3 Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed. Memorialization processes*, January 23, 2014. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session25/Documents/A_HRC_25_49_ENG.DOC.
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- 293.** The original text: "Ja, vječni kamen simbol podsjećam te drage posjetiće na 611 cigana koji padoše kao žrtve fašističkog terora u toku velikog oslobodilačkog rata od 1941. do 1945. godine."
- 294.** U Žeravici održan pomen stradalim Romima [Commemoration of Roma Victims Held in Žeravica], Radio Gradiska, July 4, 2020. Available at: <https://www.radio-gradiska.com/u-zeravici-odrzan-pomen-stradalim-romima/>.
- 295.** Danijel Vojak et al., *Romi u Drugom svjetskom ratu u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj, 1941.-1945. [Roma During the Second World War in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945]*, Foundation „Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft“ and Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2018, p.86.
- 296.** The original text: "Nevini padoste, pokoljenja Vas neće zaboraviti".
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- 299.** Official response dated December 7, 2021, from the Institute to researcher Edo Kanlić's inquiry.
- 300.** The former Begunje prisons also functioned as prisons during the Nazi occupation. And the psychiatric hospital, in the former castle, still represents a carceral institution.
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- 308.** Lule Nikolić, Roma activist and President of Roma National Council, interview by David Dragoljub Orlović, Zagreb, December, 2021.
- 309.** Emiliano Aliu, Executive Director, Roma Versitas Albania, interview by Ram Hadroj, Tirana, October 6, 2021.
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- Gordana NEŠKOVIĆ, journalist, interviewed by Milovan Pisarri, Belgrade, February 18, 2022.
- Hasan Mehmed HALIMOLU, witness and survivor of WWII, interview by Hristo Kyuchukov, February 5, 2022.
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- Vassileios PANTZOS, President of the Panhellenic Roma Confederation Ellan Passe, interview by Eleni Kouki, Athens, November 23, 2021.
- Vera KLOPČIČ, Expert in minority laws, Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, Member of the Committee of Experts for the Supervision of the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Member of the Slovene national delegation at the IHRA and Honorary Member of the Association of Roma in Slovenia, interview by Alenka Janko Spreizer, Ljubljana, October 19, 2021.
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Appendix

Annotated List of Archival Resources

The study contributors analyzed existing archival records (including oral archives) of individuals and families, policies and laws, newspapers, etc., that contained information about the plight of the Roma during the Holocaust and WWII in the targeted countries. Based on the archival research, the study contributors from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Kosovo*, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia created annotated lists of national archival resources (archival fonds or single documents) or oral history, which we compiled for future research and use.

APPENDIX



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