

Roma Holocaust Memorial 2024 Newsletter



Introduction & Welcome

Welcome to the Roma Holocaust Memorial edition of the RSG newsletter, where we write about an historic Roma Holocaust Memorial Day event, announce the winners of the GRTHM art competitions, and showcase our current work within the Health and Wellbeing Alliance.

On the 2nd of August we attended a Roma Holocaust Memorial Day event in Newcastle, at the proposed site of the first Roma Holocaust memorial to be built in England. The Roma Holocaust is often described as “the forgotten Holocaust”, due to the lack of public, legal and scholarly attention paid to it by non-Roma after the Second World War. The building of a memorial in this country is highly significant, given not only the “forgetting”, but also the repression of memories of the Roma Holocaust. For example, the first memorial to the Roma murdered in the Holocaust in [Germany](#) was erected as late as 2012. In the [Czech Republic](#), a pig farm was allowed to stand for 50 years on the site of the Lety concentration camp that had exclusively held Roma prisoners.

Whilst it is integral that we remember and raise awareness of the Roma killed during the Holocaust, we must also acknowledge that the discrimination and persecution of Roma in Europe did not start and end with the Second World War. For instance, eugenicist practices such as the forced sterilisation of Roma women that had taken place in many European states prior to and during the Holocaust, continued in [Sweden](#) and [Norway](#) after the war, and in the [Czech Republic](#) and [Slovakia](#) into the 21st century. These policies and practices were part of a package that sought to control, remove or forcibly assimilate Roma populations.

The forced and unjust removal of Roma children from their families by the state, has also been part of this package, and has been widespread across Europe for hundreds of years. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1761, Maria Theresa [decreed](#) that Roma children were

to be removed from their families, and brought up by non-Roma. In Scotland, Gypsy and Traveller communities shared this experience, with 1/5 of Scottish Traveller children in 1917 being **removed** from their families. In Ceausescu's Romania, Roma children were forcibly removed from their families to be trafficked in the "**baby trade**".

Today, across the continent and the UK, Roma children are overrepresented in state care, for example in **Slovakia** Roma children make up 80% of those in children's homes, while making up 10% of the overall population. This is a symptom of oppression and discrimination against Roma and the poverty that accompanies it.

The impact of this shared history and experience of Roma, including Roma in the UK, cannot be overstated and must be taken into account when looking at the relationship between Roma communities and children's services. This is the lens through which the events in Harehills, which followed the removal of children from a Roma family, should be viewed.

We appreciate local authorities more frequently including the Roma Holocaust in their Holocaust memorial programmes and raising awareness of this history. However, what must accompany this is a reflection on how their current treatment of Roma residents, in particular those in child protection proceedings, fits into the long history of oppression of Roma. They should also reflect on how this history impacts their engagement with Roma communities.

After the events in Harehills it is imperative that this reflection be followed by action. The upcoming Mishto campaign, which we shared details of in our previous **newsletter**, provides practical and realistic steps to improve Roma communities' engagement with public services and transform the lives of Roma people in the UK. We will be inviting local authorities across the country to join the campaign.

At a time when minority communities, including Roma, have been attacked and intimidated during the race riots that took place in many English cities, it is vitally important that local authorities show support. Rather than bow to the pressure of the far right and enact exclusionary policies, we need local authorities to practise inclusivity and show refugees, migrants and minorities that they belong here.

News Focus

This month's newsletter focuses on:

- [Roma Holocaust Memorial Day](#)
- [Events in Harehills](#)
- [Far right violence](#)
- [Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month Art Competition](#)
- [Library of GRT health research and guidance](#)
- [Ukraine donation pages](#)

Roma Holocaust Memorial Day



On the 2nd of August RSG joined Roma from around the country at a ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of the liquidation of the Roma camp at Auschwitz, and remembering all Roma murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the

Holocaust.

The ceremony took place in the memorial garden of the civic centre in Newcastle. The Roma flag was raised, then speeches were given on the proposed site of the first Roma Holocaust memorial to be established in England. Representatives of Roma organisations, local councillors, the Sheriff and Deputy Lord Mayor of Newcastle, and representatives from International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance gave moving speeches to mark the date, and to celebrate the historical significance of a physical memorial being placed in Newcastle.

The ceremony was followed by more speeches, readings of poems, musical performances and a dinner at the Romanian cultural centre in Benwell.

The memorial is set to be unveiled in January 2025. If you want to donate to the fundraising campaign, click [here](#).

IHRA online resources

IHRA has co-funded the creation of a website, available in several languages, with extensive resources for learning and teaching about the Roma Holocaust.

The resources include worksheets on camps and life before and during the Holocaust, biographies of victims of the Holocaust, and background information for 13 countries.

The website can be accessed [here](#).

Events in Harehills

Following the forceful removal of Roma children from their family by Children's Services in Harehills, Leeds on the 18th of July, disorder broke out in the area. Roma activists with experience in child protection cases travelled to Leeds to provide support and advocacy for the family.

After a [court hearing](#) on the 23rd of July, the children were returned to their extended family as a temporary measure, however a second hearing will take place this month to

come to a permanent decision on the placement of the children.

The event highlighted the huge impact, on both families and wider communities, of poor engagement between Children's Services and Roma, as detailed the statement from RSG and other Roma organisations, which can be read [here](#).

For more information and analysis of the events, we recommend Jonathan Lee's [article](#) published on the ERRC website.

Law for Life report on children's services

A report has been published by Law for Life on Roma families' experiences with children's services, sharing the perspectives of Roma who have been involved in child protection cases, as well analysing legal cases and child safeguarding practice reviews. The report highlights inequalities, but also gives recommendations on how to improve the situation.

It can be read [here](#).

Far right violence

After the race riots seen in England and Northern Ireland this month, we talked to community members about how the violence impacted them.

Roma people moved to the UK to escape racism, segregation in education, severe inequalities in health and housing, and discrimination in employment in their countries of origin. As Irina, Roma Big Issue vendor, says: "Our own country, where we were born and where our ancestors were born didn't offer us as much as the UK...Here in Britain, people come with hope. They hope to do something for their future, for their children, for their family."

However, the reality in Britain is not without challenges, and recent events have shown what years of the hostile environment and scapegoating of migrants can lead to.

"With everything that is happening now, with riots and stabbings, I can't say that I feel safe... It's tough and scary." (Irina)

Marija, told us: “These violent events show how asylum seekers and anyone not perceived as white can become targets of hate and discrimination, leaving many feeling unwelcome and marginalised. As a young Roma person, it is disheartening to witness such intolerance continue despite efforts to promote understanding and acceptance. This ongoing racism is not just an attack on minority communities but an assault on the values of diversity and respect that should define our society.”

Other Roma people have reported to us that they were unaware that the large anti-racist mobilisations seen in places like [Walthamstow](#), were counter protests. This highlights the need for any anti-racist movement to be as broad and egalitarian as possible, and the need for organising and engaging with more isolated migrant communities, who are most vulnerable to racist attacks.

We are reaching out in solidarity to all groups and communities who share our vision of a society underpinned by respect and social justice, to work together across ethnicities, ages and classes to challenge racism in the UK.

(This section is adapted from our contribution to a Big Issue [article](#) published on the 9th of August.)

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month Art Competition

Thank you to all the entrants to our annual Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month Art Competition! We received so many beautiful and thoughtful pieces of art, poetry and music, it was difficult to choose a winner.

However, we are happy to share the two winning pieces, from, Marek and Sorjana!

I AM

I Am Roma
 I am a football player
 I am a Rugby player
 I am a cyclist
 I am a gamer
 I am a boy
 I am a child
 I am a swimmer
 I am an artist
 I am British
 I am brown
 I am a dreamer
 I am different
 I am the same
 I am sad
 I am happy
 I am a human
 I Am Roma

"I am" self-portrait by MP, age 11,
 June 2024

MP, age 11
 June 2024

Winner of the under-twelves category.

I DECIDED TO WRITE A POEM

Let me tell u a story it's about a girl name

Glory.

She didn't have a permanent house but she
was moving from North to South.

She didn't go to school because of her fate
but she had a chance to see the world what
was for her great.

She loved forest and running barefoot on the
grass it's a pity that this time is past.

Gloria knew she was a Roma girl she need to
dance after all.

She loved looking at the sky while dancing
next to the fire with her sisters that was the
biggest desire.

Unfortunately the time has passed despite
her young age she had to marry her husband
and that was for her new page.

And this story must end here just as Romani
music first grabs your heart and then leave
you in tears.

Winner of the over-twelves category.

Library of GRT health research and guidance

We have recently compiled a library of health research and guidance we published as part of our work within the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance Programme together with Friends, Families and Travellers. The Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Health and Wellbeing Alliance (HW Alliance) is a partnership between sector representatives and the health and care system, including the Department of Health and Social Care, UK Health Security Agency and NHS England. Each year, members of the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance collaborate to undertake a range of health inequalities focused research and insight projects.

Click [here](#) to read more about our research and guidance into social prescribing, digital enablers in primary care, mental health inequalities, maternal health inequalities in the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities and our Roma Health Guide.

Ukraine donation pages

Human rights fund for Ukrainian Roma

European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) are [collecting donations](#) to support their efforts to prevent the discrimination and rejection of Roma refugees in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

Hot meals in Ukraine

Given the difficulties that Roma are experiencing in accessing humanitarian aid, [ERGO Network](#) and [Roma Women Fund Chiricli](#) have launched a campaign: [Hot meals in Ukraine](#).

The cost of providing one hot meal is €4.

For more information about Roma Support Group, go to our website and look at the ["projects" pages](#).

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Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily suggest that they are in accordance with the trustees of Roma Support Group.

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