

INFORMATION

MEMORIAL TO THE SINTI AND ROMA OF EUROPE MURDERED UNDER THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST REGIME



DANI KARAVAN ON THE MEMORIAL

A clearing in the Tiergarten, lined with trees and shrubs, in the vicinity of the Reichstag building. A quaint, unimposing site, withdrawn from the bustle of the city. A site of inner sadness, a site for feeling pain, for remembering and not letting the annihilation of the Sinti and Roma by the National Socialist regime fall into oblivion.

Is such a place possible? Or is it only found in emptiness, in nothingness? Do I have the strength to create a site of nothingness? A site deprived of everything. No words, no names, no metal, no stone. Only tears, only water, surrounded by the survivors, by those who remember what happened, by those who know the horror as well as those who never experienced it.

They are reflected, upside down, in the water of the deep, black pit, covered by the sky – the water, the tears. Only a small stone, which sinks and rises, again and again, day after day. And on it every day a new blossom, so that each day we can remember anew, constantly, to all eternity.

The water encloses the sky, the blue, the grey, the black sky. Clouds, light, darkness. The whirling water swallows it all. All that remains is the sound of a lonely violin raising a murdered melody, poised in pain.

Dani Karavan, born in 1930 in Tel Aviv, is the artist who designed the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered under the National Socialist Regime.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus: Reichstag/Bundestag or Hauptbahnhof, 100, M85, M41, TXL, 120, 123, 142, 147, 245
S-Bahn stations: Brandenburger Tor or Hauptbahnhof, S1, S2, S25, S5, S7, S75
U-Bahn (underground) stations: Bundestag or Brandenburger Tor, U55

CONTACT

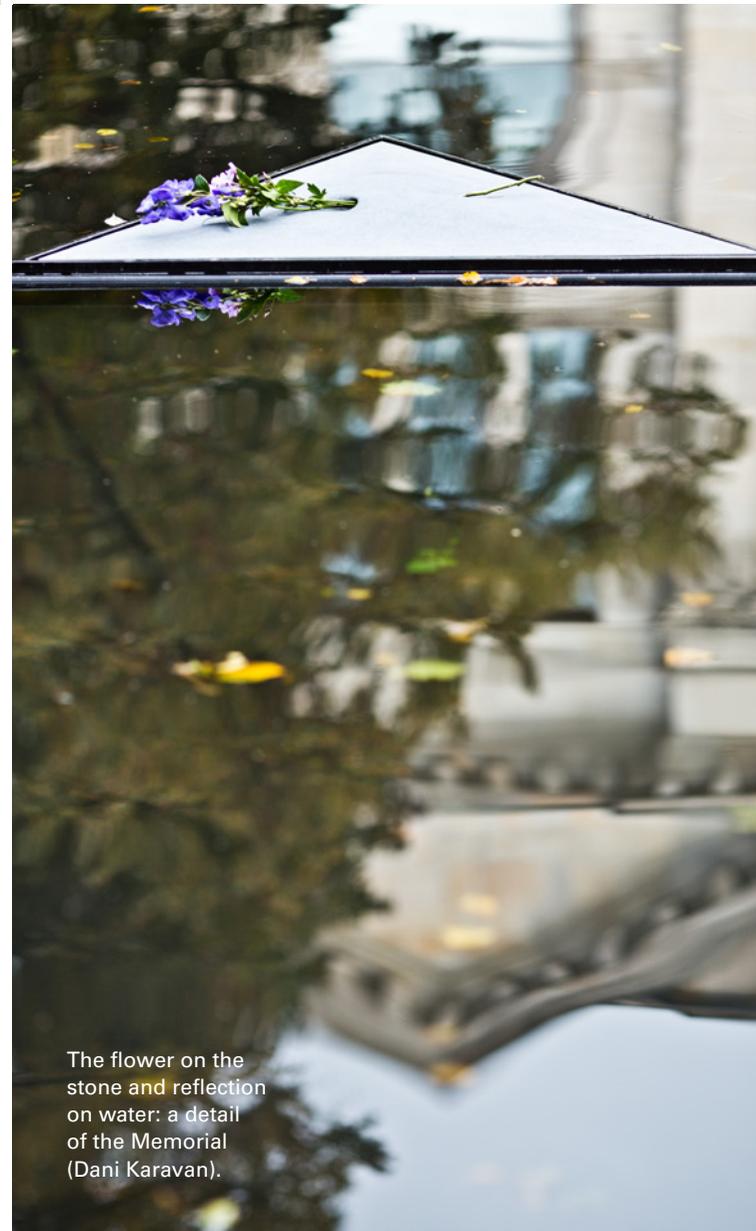
Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – Executive Office – Georgenstraße 23 10117 Berlin www.stiftung-denkmal.de

Funded by



upon a Decision of the German Bundestag

Photo credits: Front page: ©Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe / Photo: Marko Priske. Photo 2: ©Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, Heidelberg. Photo 3: ©USHMM. Photo 4: ©USHMM. Photo 5: ©Bundesarchiv R 165 Bild-244-42. Photo 6: ©Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi. Photo 7: ©Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid. Photo 8: ©Dani Karavan. Graphic design and map: ©buschfeld.com



The flower on the stone and reflection on water: a detail of the Memorial (Dani Karavan).

Sunken in face
extinguished eyes
cold lips
silence
a torn heart
without breath
without words
without words
no tears.

*Poem by Italian Rom
Santino Spinelli*

The violin sound at the memorial was recorded by German Sinto Romeo Franz.

Ghetto, probably in Radom, around 1941: Senta and Sonja Birkenfelder were deported from Ludwigshafen to Poland in 1940 with other German Sinti and Roma. / Roma boys in the Warsaw ghetto, around 1941.





CHRONOLOGY OF THE GENOCIDE OF THE SINTI AND ROMA

Under National Socialism, hundreds of thousands of people in Germany and other European countries were persecuted as »Gypsies« between 1933 and 1945. Most of them defined themselves according to the various groups to which they belonged, for example Sinti, Roma, Lallere, Lovari or Manouche. The largest groups in Europe were the Sinti and Roma. The goal of the National Socialist state and its racist ideology was the destruction of this minority: Men, women and children were seized and taken away, or murdered in their hometowns or in ghettos, concentration camps or killing centres. Members of the Yeniche and other travellers formed a separate group of victims who were also persecuted.

1933 Sinti and Roma are subjected to more intense discrimination, increasingly deprived of their rights and excluded from society. The first Sinti and Roma are interned in concentration camps. Forced sterilization follows in 1934.

1935 In many cities within the German Reich, compulsory camps are set up. Two weeks before the opening of the 1936 Olympic Games, hundreds of people are interned in such a camp in the Berlin borough of Marzahn. The camps serve to concentrate, restrict, register and isolate as well as provide a source of forced labour.

1936 In accordance with the Nuremberg laws on race and citizenship (1935), Reich Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick decrees in January 1936: »Alien races include all other races; in Europe, these are, apart from the Jews, as a rule only the Gypsies.« On the basis of this decree, a racist special law is enacted. Those affected are, among

other things, forbidden to marry and excluded from certain professions and the German armed forces.

1938 Over 2,000 Sinti and Roma from Germany and Austria, including children aged twelve and older, are seized and taken away to Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Mauthausen and other concentration camps. On orders from Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police Heinrich Himmler, a central office is set up at the Reich Criminal Police Office in Berlin to manage and coordinate the registration and persecution of the Sinti and Roma. In December, Himmler issues a basic decree »to tackle the Gypsy question on the basis of race« with the aim of finding a »final solution to the Gypsy question«. By the end of World War II, the Research Office for Racial Hygiene, which was given the task of registering Roma and Sinti, has prepared some 24,000 »racial expert opinions«. These provide an essential basis for deportation to killing centres.

1939 With the start of World War II, the Reich Security Main Office, which plays a leading role in organizing the genocide, plans the deportation of all those registered as »Gypsies«. In preparing the deportations, the Reich Security Main Office decrees that all those affected »be instructed not to leave their current place of residence until further notice«.

1940 On orders from Himmler, the deportation of entire families from Germany to occupied Poland begins: »The first transport of Gypsies to the General Government, with 2,500 persons ... will move out in mid-May.« In camps, and later in ghettos as well, Sinti and Roma are forced to labour under murderous conditions. In many places, they are required to carry special identification papers or wear armbands bearing the letter »Z« (as in »Zigeuner«, German for »Gypsy«).

1941 The systematic mass shooting of Roma starts in the occupied Soviet Union and other occupied territories of south-eastern Europe. A mobile killing unit, a so-called Einsatzgruppe of the Security Police and the Security Service of the SS, reports from the Crimea: »Gypsy question resolved.« Some 5,000 Roma and Sinti are deported from the Burgenland region of Austria to the ghetto at Litzmannstadt (Łódź) in occupied Poland, where more than 600 of them die. The survivors are gassed in specially equipped vans at the Kulmhof (Chełmno) killing centre in January 1942.

1942 After a meeting with Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels on the transfer of prisoners from the judicial system to the SS, Reich Justice Minister Otto Thierack notes in a protocol »Jews and Gypsies as such ... are to be exterminated. The idea of extermination by work is best.«

1943 On the basis of a decree issued by Heinrich Himmler on 16 December 1942, the deportation of some 23,000 Sinti and Roma from throughout Europe begins in February. The destination of the transports is a part of the killing centre Auschwitz-Birkenau that has been designated by the SS as the »Gypsy camp«. Within a few months, most die of hunger, disease, or acts of violence by the SS. Numerous children fall victim to the experiments of SS camp doctor Josef Mengele.

1944 On 16 May, many of the 6,000 prisoners still alive in the »Gypsy camp« at Auschwitz-Birkenau resist their imminent murder. Around half of them are deported to other concentration camps for forced labour. The remaining 2,897 survivors – mostly children, women, and elderly people – are murdered in the gas chambers in the night of 2 August and the early morning of 3 August.

1945 By the end of the war in May 1945, as many as 500,000 men, women, and children who were persecuted as »Gypsies« have become victims of the genocide under National Socialist rule. The precise number is probably impossible to determine.

»The Nazi dictatorship inflicted a grave injustice on the Sinti and Roma. They were persecuted for reasons of race. These crimes constituted an act of genocide.«
Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, 17 March 1982

»The genocide of the Sinti and Roma was motivated by the same obsession with race, carried out with the same resolve and the same intent to achieve their methodical and final extermination as the genocide against the Jews. Throughout the National Socialists' sphere of influence, the Sinti and Roma were murdered systematically, family by family, from the very young to the very old.«
Federal President Roman Herzog, 16 March 1997

Photos (from left to right): Roma from Burgenland on the muster ground of Buchenwald concentration camp, probably April 1940. / Sinti and Roma families are herded from the Hohenasperg through Koenigsstrasse and deported to Poland, 22 May 1940. / The evacuated »gypsy camp« in the Litzmannstadt (Lodz) ghetto, 1942. / Settela Steinbach (1934–1944) during deportation from Westerbork to Auschwitz.