



**MESSAGE FROM MR. KIYO AKASAKA  
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FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**TO THE YOUTH SEMINAR ON  
ROMA AND SINTI GENOCIDE:  
MEMORY, IDENTITY AND PRESENT-DAY RACISM**

**1 AUGUST 2011, KRAKOW, POLAND**

The fate suffered by the Roma and Sinti communities in Europe during the Holocaust will forever stand as a symbol of the cruelty of the Nazis and their collaborators, who deliberately targeted them for persecution, deportation, medical experiments and murder. We honour the Roma men, women and children of the “Zigeunerlager” camp who were brutally killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz on 2 August 1944. And we pay tribute to the many other Roma and Sinti victims throughout the Third Reich.

The United Nations is helping to preserve this history. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has drawn attention to the crimes inflicted on the Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust, as well as to their courage, in his messages for the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, observed each year on 27 January. The painful stories of the Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust have also been shared with people from around the world through an exhibition at the United Nations.

Too often, and unacceptably, the racist beliefs upon which the Nazis based their policies continue to be reflected in attitudes towards minorities today. Members of minorities remain victims of intolerance, discrimination and prejudice. This hatred can threaten and tear communities and societies apart, including those in which people of different cultural and religious backgrounds have lived together for centuries.

That is why the stories, and the history, of the Roma and Sinti need to be told and learned – to prevent and stop ignorance and future crimes. Education plays a vital role in teaching adults and new generations alike about this terrible episode of our history, and about how to live together, with respect for diversity.

To our young friends I say, know and be proud of your heritage, equip yourselves with skills and knowledge, become active in your communities, stand up to hatred, and defend the human rights of all. I have been deeply fortunate to meet and know representatives of the Roma and Sinti community and have seen first-hand their commitment to building a world in which all people live together in a life of dignity.

I encourage you to visit the website of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme to read and download educational materials on the Roma and Sinti experience during the Holocaust. Articles by Roma experts, including László Teleki, the first Roma Member of the Hungarian Parliament, and Andrzej Mirga, Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues for the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, are also featured in the Programme’s Discussion Papers Series.

I congratulate Andrzej Mirga and all those who organized this seminar. Only by understanding and learning from the past can we create a better world for today and tomorrow.