

**Germany-wide Protest Days in Berlin from 2 – 4 October 2009
against the Deportation of Roma to Kosovo
Potsdamer Platz, 5 minutes to 12:00 (Noon)!**

BORN TO BE DEPORTED

FIVE MIN. TO MIDNIGHT

On the occasion of the Day of the Refugee (02/10/09), anti-racist and human rights groups, Roma representatives and supporters, refugee councils and organisations from the all over the country call for protests against the deportation of Roma, in Potsdamer Platz (Berlin) on 2nd, 3rd and 4th October 2009.

The reason for our protests is the intention of the interior ministers of the German Länder to deport after the elections all Roma families to Kosovo, too, who, for years, have only been “tolerated” in Germany, but until now have been safe from deportation because of the intolerable security situation in Kosovo! This summer has already seen the occasional deportation of Roma with and without children from Lower Saxony, Baden-Wuerttemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and Hesse to Kosovo into a situation where their lives are in danger. A first mass deportation flight for Roma families from NRW is already scheduled for 28th September!

Germany is in a special way responsible for the crimes of genocide committed against the European Roma by our grandparents. The hatred against Roma spreading again across Europe must be stopped. Especially in Germany it must not be allowed to flare up. Roma who sought protection from persecution, resentment and destitution in Germany must not be deported back to the refugee camps and dumped on the rubbish tips of Europe.

We demand:

Immediate deportation stop for Roma from Kosovo!

No deportation of Roma refugees,

wherever to !!

**Secure and unlimited right to stay and right to exist as
compensation for the crimes of genocide**

and German passports for all Roma (who want them)

in Germany !

Watch out for further information on:

www.rromaakt.de and www.ari-berlin.org

Background and Current Issues of Roma Persecution in Kosovo¹

70 years ago the Germans threw themselves into World War II. The genocide of the Jews, Sinti and Roma all across Europe was carried out by them with bureaucratic precision, aiming at a complete “Aryanisation”.

Some time later (February 1942), after the Jewish and Roma populations had been deported and killed, German occupiers in Belgrade announced that Serbia was the “only country in which the Jewish question and the Gypsy question“ were “solved”.

After the end of the war it took decades before Germany finally promised that descendants of Jewish victims as well as Jewish refugees persecuted again in Eastern Europe and Russia would be rehabilitated and integrated into German society.²

But the descendants of Sinti and Roma genocide survivors from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe were excluded. Even worse:

20 years ago Germany was the first to recognise the states emerging from Yugoslavia’s dissolution. It stood by and let the subsequent ethnicisation wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo happen, with hundreds of thousands dead or displaced. The Yugoslav Roma were caught in the crossfire. They became internally displaced people living in slum camps or fled to Western Europe in the thousands.

10 years ago the first war being waged again by Germany along with NATO was allegedly meant to end the “humanitarian catastrophe” in Kosovo³. Instead, hundreds of thousands fled Kosovo during and after the war, including the major part of the Roma population⁴. The 50,000 international troops entering the small country (no bigger than the German state of Hesse) in June 99 again just stood by and watched, and “helped“ the Roma to flee while their houses were looted and set on fire. During the pogrom against the largest Roma settlement in the centre of Mitrovica, KFOR troops “protected“ those fleeing by carting them off to a lead-contaminated area in the north. For 8 years the international rulers turned a blind eye, while children living there in unimaginable “3rd world” conditions suffered severe lead poisoning. Only then the construction of a few housing units in the former Roma Mahala area started—but without land and behind barbed wire: The land in the centre of Mitrovica formerly belonging to the Roma had been declared a local recreation ground.

The second wave of pogroms against Roma in 2004 also took place under the noses of KFOR, which again did not intervene.

Only a fraction of the former Roma population is still living in Kosovo today, in ethnically separated districts of the towns and villages, with almost no access to income, health care and education, and in constant fear of new attacks. Those, however, are mostly not registered and punished, but trivialised as usual distributions conflicts occurring everywhere in the country. People who dare to press charges against their attackers are later threatened, forced to sell their properties, or their houses are burned. Thus, most Kosovo Roma live as refugees in (partly illegal) slums and camps in neighbouring countries, with no chance to integrate into society and no future, many of them threatened by eviction.

Today, Roma are again marginalised, disenfranchised, locked in camps or behind barbed wire and walls, “for their own protection”, dumped on rubbish tips, deprived of fundamental rights such as

¹ Kosovo has been formally independent since February 2008. The government, however, cannot take a step without the international administrators and KFOR troops who ruled Kosovo for 10 years and still exercise veto rights. Kosovo, a province of Serbia in the former Yugoslavia, enjoyed autonomy under Tito. From 1989 to 1999 Kosovo was occupied by Milosevic’s troops and the Albanian majority population was terrorised, so that hundreds of thousands fled abroad. Then and even more so today Kosovo is Europe’s poorhouse; unemployment is over 50%, over 90% among the Roma.

² Bit by bit, these promises were undercut by ever more restrictions.

³ In fact, a “humanitarian catastrophe” had already persisted for 10 years. It had not, in the first place, been provoked by the Milosevic regime, but among other things by IMF measures forcing Yugoslavia into a “debt trap”, state dissolution and dependence from the West. The German politics of the 1990s were thus able to influence the ethnicisation wars considerably, they were intended! Only in 1998, the phrases “humanitarian catastrophe” and “never again Auschwitz” (foreign minister Joseph Fischer) were used deliberately to gain acceptance for a NATO attack in violation of international law with Germany participating for the first time and significantly!

⁴ Estimates of the Roma population living in Kosovo before the NATO war range from 100,000 to 200,000.

housing, work, education and health, maltreated by the police, despised, threatened, hunted, beaten, shot, and driven away by racist majority populations in all Eastern and South-Eastern European successor states of the former “socialist Eastern Bloc” and former Yugoslavia.

And the Roma who fled to Germany and Western Europe, can they, at least, live secure lives here free from threat and from the clutches of poverty?

Kosovars who fled to Germany and Western Europe 10, 15 or 20 years ago finance most of the income of relatives still living in Europe’s poorest country. Thus, many families have been deprived of their means of existence by deportations since the end of the Kosovo War, which has further aggravated the social and ethnicised conflicts that continue until today, even after Kosovo’s independence, and thus the existential threat for the Roma.

Of the 220,000 war refugees living here after the end of the Kosovo War, officially only 32,200 are still in Germany today⁵. They are young, below 27 years of age on average, a quarter were born in Germany. 17,800 of the Kosovars still living here only hold a temporary residence title or a “residence permit on probation”, 3,700 are only “tolerated” or without any residence title. Many of these 21,500 people were unable to return because of war trauma. Or they are Roma or other minority members—this also includes the Albanian speaking Muslim Roma who refer to themselves as Ashkali or Egyptians, but are marginalised, too.

A new readmission agreement was forced on the new Kosovo government by Germany in April this year, aiming at the unimpeded deportation of Roma minority members who had been safe until then. The agreement came into force in July. Since then, the German foreigners authorities have been preparing the deportation of all Kosovars with insecure residence status. For the most part, this concerns Roma people. They are the least likely to meet the unrealistically high requirements set by the Residence Act. Many don’t have passports and are de facto disenfranchised and stateless.

The first Roma have already been deported from Hesse, Lower Saxony, Baden-Wuerttemberg and NRW to a “home country” where their lives and livelihoods are in danger: Children born in Germany and fully integrated into schools and sports clubs who have never learned to write or speak Albanian, but only German (and Romani), whose true homes and futures are destroyed for the second time—like those of their ancestors. Romani fathers were, despite employment and after years of residence, forcibly separated from their children born in Germany by deportation; a father from Lower Saxony was deported with his severely handicapped son. A Romani woman with her 2 children born in Lower Saxony was—in spite of court protection from her violent ex-husband—deported to Kosovo along with her rapist.

Despite dire warnings about their deportation from Germany, not only from various human rights groups like amnesty international, Pro Asyl⁶, WHO or Human Rights Watch, but also from German members of Parliament and of political parties, church representatives and high EU representatives who are aware of the real existence- and life-threatening situation for Roma in Kosovo, the interior ministers rigidly hold on to their will to deport them.

A democratic Germany must acknowledge its historical responsibility for the crimes of genocide committed against the European Roma by our grandparents. It must therefore grant an unrestricted and secure right to stay also to the descendants of the Eastern and South-Eastern European Roma who escaped the genocide seeking protection from persecution, resentment and destitution in Germany!

Berlin Alliance against the Deportation of Roma

visdp: **FFM** (Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration e.V.), Gneisenastr.2a, 10961 Berlin

⁵ In comparison to the very low numbers from the Central Register of Aliens (Ausländerzentralregister) given above, which comprises only the Kosovars with new Kosovo passports, however, a figure of Kosovo Roma living here with Serbian or ex-Yugoslav passports who are only “tolerated” or hold a provisional residence permit being at least four times as high has been assigned the origin “from Serbia.” They are also under threat of deportation to Kosovo or yet to Serbia, if necessary.

⁶ Bernd Mesovic of Pro Asyl said in a press statement on 26 June this year: “Today someone who deports Roma there, knows: Almost without exception they end up in slums or on rubbish tips.”