

ROMA RIGHTS

Call for papers:

Roma Rights Journal 1/2016: Roma and Conflict

Deadline for submissions: June 5, 2016

The modern world has been shaped and re-shaped by conflict. Its internal and external borders tell stories of war, conflict and unrest that have had huge impacts on populations. The impact of these conflicts on minority populations, particularly those which are already marginalised, deserves special attention.

The assertion that Roma have never started a war is one which is often repeated on special occasions or anniversaries. It is a statement which is instilled with pride, but also tinged with other emotions. Those who make this assertion know that even if Roma have not started wars, Romani communities have been deeply and tragically affected by conflict. They also know that recognition of the impact of conflict is not always forthcoming.

In the shadow of the *Porajmos*, the murder of hundreds of thousands of Roma during World War II, there were no Roma witnesses called at the trials of Nuremburg despite the Tribunal formally recognising atrocities committed against them. Although some memorials have been put in place (for example, the memorials in Berlin and Budapest), another significant site in the Czech Republic is still used as a pig farm. Similarly, the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has not convicted anybody for committing crimes against Roma (the defendants in the only case which related to crimes against Kosovar Roma – *Haradinaj et al.* - were fully acquitted).

Special focus should be given to the position of Roma women in conflict and post-conflict situations, and reparation and rehabilitation processes. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for special attention to be given to women and girls, acknowledging that they experience conflict in different ways. To date at least 58 states have adopted National Action Plans on the implementation of this resolution. The 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area also draws special attention to Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations, including the particular needs of women.

Roma have been direct targets of aggression in conflicts – most tragically the *Porajmos*. At times Roma have been dragged into conflicts unwillingly (for example, Domari in the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and Turkey, and Roma in the Western Balkans and in Columbia during the FARQ rebellion). At other times Roma have been criticised for not participating or forced to take sides (for example Roma in Ukraine and in Kosovo, or Domari in Egypt during the Arab Spring). Roma have also at times engaged willingly – finding an affiliation with one side in a conflict (such as Roma leaders in Kosovo). Heroic stories of Roma partisans during World War II and civil wars in Spain, Portugal, Greece, and countries of Latin America are being gradually revealed, but many more remain hidden, ignored, or forgotten in dominant nationalist narratives. Irish Travellers in the Troubles found an affiliation with Republicans/Nationalists. To this day, there are different perceptions of the attitude of Roma in Kosovo towards Serbian Unionist/Federationists, and whether some Roma anticipated that the new ethnic states would not bring more prosperity and acceptance for them. Some Roma in rural Ukraine supported the ‘Maidan’. What was the long-term impact in terms of relations between communities in such cases?

As well as being omitted from the work of international criminal tribunals and humanitarian aid

policies, Roma are also frequently left out of post-conflict reparations, peace-building negotiations and development policies. Many Roma also remain displaced and/or stateless.

When international actors consider Roma in conflict, it is often done with a breath-taking negligence, as in the case of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Zvečan/Zveçan where Roma were relocated from their homes by the UN Mission in Kosovo to camps in an environmentally hazardous lead mines area and left there for more than ten years. In April 2016, 17 years after the camps were created, a UN tribunal condemned the UN mission concerned for misconduct and ordered an official apology and compensation.

Submissions

Submissions are invited on topics which reflect on the impact of conflict on Roma and other related groups. Due the wide ranging impact of conflict, submissions taking a variety of approaches are welcomed.

How do Roma react to a conflict which appears to have political, economic or ethnic bases, when they have been excluded from participation in any of these spheres?

And what happens when conflict undermines or threatens ways of life, social, economic and other networks?

Other areas and questions which come to the fore include the status of victims of conflict in international law, including statelessness arising from conflict; the investigation of war crimes against Roma or the failure to investigate them, including Nuremburg, the Eichmann trial, and other trials related to World War II, as well as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; historical memory, commemoration, denials and acknowledgements; propaganda and psychological war; terrorism/counter-terrorism, the impact of surveillance and the extended powers of security services; questions of loyalty to the majority groups and participation in conflict; restitution, reconstruction and peace-building in post-conflict settings and participation in these processes; the particular situation of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations; structural violence against Roma, and cultural violence as a legitimisation of violence; and patterns of violence against Roma, particularly in relation to far-right political parties and groups.

Conflicts under consideration include World War I and the wars of independence and civil wars across the world in their aftermath; World War II, which decimated Roma populations all across the world; the wars of the former Yugoslavia, and across the former Soviet Union; civil wars in Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina; protracted conflicts such as the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the Turkish-Kurdish conflict within Turkey, the so-called Arab Spring revolutions, and the ongoing conflict in Syria and Afghanistan, and its impact on Domari in particular; as well as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Call for abstracts: those interested in participating should submit a **500-word abstract** no later than **June 5, 2016** proposing a paper on the theme of Roma and conflict. Selected participants will be notified by **June 19, 2016**.

Abstracts and proposals should be sent to marek.szilvasi@errc.org.

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