

PILGRIMAGE TO AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU, 19TH SEPTEMBER 2014

FINAL APPEAL

Young Europeans from the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, we have gathered together in Auschwitz, upon the invitation of the Community of Sant'Egidio, to preserve the memory of anti-Semitism, antiziganism, of the killing of the weak because of their weakness, of the horror generated by second world war in the heart of Europe, up to the abyss of the extermination camps.

The hatred among peoples and the unprecedented violence of this conflict originated from the hatred sown a hundred years ago during the Great War, which drew into its depths so many young Europeans, causing the death of ten million of them. War generates more horror, it produces more violence, it is a senseless slaughter.

In this extermination camp, the eyes of children led to their death, of desperate mothers and innocent men and women hurt by barbarity have shaken our conscience. History, written by war, frightens us and is not what we want. Whoever uses violence always discredits his or her cause. All is lost with war.

All is lost, because the scornful and merciless motto of war wins: "What do I care?" In our hearts we hear the echo of the words of Pope Francis: "With the heart of a son, of a brother, of a father, I ask you all, and for us all, to change our hearts: from "What do I care?" to tears. For all the victims of the madness of war in all times".

Therefore we, young Europeans of different languages and peoples, wish for a single destiny for all. That destiny is peace. Together we say no to violence, which feeds every conflict. No to hatred, that paves the way for war. No to fear of the other and to the culture that targets the other as an enemy. We say yes to the victory over prejudice, yes to the construction of a reconciled world, yes to the defence of life weak and innocent, whoever's it may be. We proclaim it solemnly together, because being together is our first response. War is overcome only by peace. And peace is built with audacity. Without peace, there is no future, for winners and losers alike. Our world has lost its ideals. We have an ideal to live for: peace is truly the future for all!

Here today, in Auschwitz-Birkenau, each of us is committed to a better world. Our strength is doing it together.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, 19th September 2014