

**The Address by Doris Broulová,
survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp,
On the Occasion of
The Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity
Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,
26th January 2024**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak at the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic; I am honoured to have this opportunity. This year marks 95 years since I came into this world. And believe me, during that time, I have experienced a lot in that time.

My early memories lead back to my childhood, which was generally happy. I particularly cherish the time I spent with my family in Prague until 1939. Unfortunately, the majority of my childhood memories are now connected to our meeting today. The onset of the Nazi occupation, the hunt for the heroes who successfully carried out the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, and the beginning of the so-called "Heydrichiad". Subsequent deportations from Prague with my entire family, stay in the Terezín Ghetto, several months spent in the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, the loss of loved ones, the death march to Bergen-Belsen, where I experienced liberation by the Allied forces. My childhood memories are thus linked with encounters with a man known to history as the "Angel of Death," Josef Mengele, or the moment when a falling wall as a result of the bombing in Hamburg could have taken my life while moving to the site to clear the rubble.

Recalling my childhood memories, I am reminded of the words of Dita Krausová from last year. On a similar occasion, she spoke about anti-Semitism, or rather, more precisely, about anti-Judaism, because anti-Semitic hatred is directed towards members of only one nation and religion. In the three years of my odyssey, I encountered an immense amount of such hatred. It saddens me deeply that, after 95 years of my life, I have lived to witness the resurgence of such hatred. Last year's deadly attack by Palestinian terrorists on Jewish residents beyond the borders of Gaza and Israel's subsequent response stirred up a new wave of antisemitism across Europe, which never really disappeared – it was just waiting for its opportunity. However, the attack also fueled a wave of collective hatred towards Arabs or Muslims, even though a large number of them do not agree with the aggression of Hamas, and some even condemn it. Let's not go far; Czechs attacking Ukrainians, who have fled the war, are driven by a certain kind of hatred, the assailant who, a month ago, committed the tragic act in the Klánovice Forest, at his home, and finally, at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, was also driven by a certain kind of hatred. All these recent acts fill me with immense sadness.

Whether we talk about anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, we are only using other words for the very ordinary hatred of others, which usually stems from ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and stupidity built on consciously or unconsciously spread lies. Unfortunately, the present, partly due to people's inability and, in worse cases, unwillingness of people to use new technologies wisely, the present is characterised by a wide and deliberate spread of conspiracies, rumours, misinformation – in short, lies. Lies that ultimately lead to hatred, expressed verbally, or at worst, through actions.

As I reflect on my wartime memories and the European odyssey resulting from intense anti-Semitism, I don't reminisce with bitterness, resentment, or hatred. On the contrary, more and more often in my memories, I return to many manifestations of ordinary human kindness that I experienced during the

war years, thanks to which, I believe, I can stand before you today. And so, I remember the kind teachers who devoted themselves to us selflessly, risking their safety and lives during our time in Terezín, the French prisoners of war who shared a brush or a piece of chocolate with us in Hamburg, or all those unknown individuals who persistently prevented me from falling during the death march. I had no reason not to repay them except with kindness, and I would like to direct my final appeal in that direction.

My appeal is very simple. I would like to ask everyone to find goodness in themselves and, as much as their strength and nature allow, to spread this goodness further. Through ordinary human deeds, even just a polite greeting, a smile, but above all: the truth. I ask everyone to consciously refrain from spreading lies that can ultimately cause harm. Let us appreciate the freedom we can now enjoy in unprecedented abundance but let us not misuse it by harming others with our expressions. I appeal to people not to be led by hatred, and above all, not to pass it on. Finally, I have to recall, once again, our President Václav Havel, who said the same thing. Hatred and lies must not prevail. It would be the defeat of humanity itself, a defeat of us all.

Thank you for your attention.