

**The Address by Markéta Pekarová Adamová,  
the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,  
On the Occasion of  
the Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity  
Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,  
27th January 2022**

Dear survivors and witnesses, dear President of the Senate, distinguished guests,

Today we are meeting here to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

In 2005, the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, became the Day for the Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust and the Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity, thanks to the joint efforts of the Czech Republic and more than 100 other countries in the United Nations.

The Holocaust and its inconceivable horrors, which were imprinted on the fates and memories of several generations, cannot be forgotten. Evil cannot be eradicated unless its cause is also eradicated. As a society, we should therefore consistently reject all forms of aggression - including verbal aggression. We must not remain silent when someone is humiliated, ridiculed, or even attacked for being different. Hate cannot be eliminated, but it can be left alone enough to prevent it from spreading. The Holocaust taught us a simple truth: silence is the first step towards acceptance. Silence can also become complicity. We are here today not to remain silent.

The coronavirus pandemic, sadly, has revealed deep-seated social problems, including the lack of knowledge of history. At the demonstrations against vaccination and coronavirus measures, we see some appropriating the symbol of the Jewish star and thereby equating themselves with the millions of people murdered in concentration and extermination camps. I regard the pinning of the 'yellow star' as an expression of a lack of morality and common sense, but I would also like to add that therefore we must all work together to strengthen awareness of what the Holocaust means. Indeed, the best prevention of the relativisation of these horrors is their commemoration.

I do believe that in order to fully understand what happened in the concentration camps, it is important to see these places or to hear from those who experienced these horrors. It is good that places like Auschwitz or Treblinka can be visited because they are eyewitnesses to what happened. This needs to be preserved. Anyone who comes and sees the guard towers, the barbed wire, the cells, the remains of the gas chambers and crematoria will never forget it. In such places, one wonders "How could this have happened?" The answer lies in the indifference of some to the fate of others. We must therefore not accept the thesis that we should let the sleeping dogs lie. Just because they

are asleep now does not mean they would not pose a threat to us later. Giving in to evil does not resolve the problem. On the contrary, it legitimizes it.

There is nothing that can bring back the lives of six million innocent victims. Nothing can reverse the unprecedented crimes committed. They are and will remain a dark part of the history of the world. But we must do everything we can here and now to ensure that racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism are punished in all their hideous forms. At the same time, we are obliged to pass this history on to our next generations as a memento.

Today, we are gathered to remember all those who have lost everything: their friends and families, their countries and homes, their hopes and plans, their dignity and, often in the end, their lives. All those who were considered a tattooed number instead of a human being. But we also do this to fully realize the times we live in today.

The Czech Republic has been very fortunate. We can talk about all these tragedies in the past tense; the cooperation of European countries allows us to live in peace and freedom. It is therefore the task of democratic politicians to actively defend and promote the values of tolerance, humanism, and democracy, and to speak out against those who promote racism, nationalism or openly disrespect human rights.

The Jewish way of life and the unique Jewish culture have withstood millennia of persecution and oppression. The State of Israel, which was also created in response to the horrors of the Second World War, is and always has been our ally and friend. It is the cooperation between nations and the common defence of values that will ensure that we can suppress evil when first signs appear and never again allow the world to be paralysed in the face of injustices.

Thank you for your attention.