

**The Address by Miloš Vystrčil,
The President of the Senate 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**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is 27 January, the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, the Day for the Prevention of Crimes against Humanity. Therefore, first of all, allow me to greet the Holocaust survivors and all the victims of crimes against humanity.

I would also like to greet the President of the Chamber of Deputies; I am honoured that she has visited us in the Senate. Allow me to greet my fellow senators who are either watching us together with the television viewers on the screens of their TV sets or are present on the premises, and I am also cordially greeting all the representatives of the Jewish and Roma communities.

Europe comes from Jewish-Christian roots, and today we commemorate the day when those Jewish roots were supposed to be destroyed, liquidated during the Second World War.

When my colleagues and I were going through the significant days and important anniversaries that await us in 2022, in addition to this day, there was also the 80th anniversary of the assassination of Heydrich, an event when our heroes, Jozef Gabčík, and Jan Kubiš, and others, assassinated one of the executioners of the Czech nation. And I mention this because Reinhard Heydrich was also - or should have been - the executioner of the Jewish nation. It is 80 years ago this year (on 20 January) that a meeting was held near Berlin in the town of Wannsee, initiated by the Deputy/Acting Reich Protector Heydrich, and that meeting had one aim, and that was to streamline the liquidation of European Jewry.

It concerned 11 million Jews who were to be transported to the East and liquidated. Heydrich's speech was recorded at that meeting, in which he said - and I quote - that "...in the course of the final solution, the Jews are to be allocated for appropriate labour in the East. Able-bodied Jews, separated by sexes, will be taken in large work columns to these areas for work on roads, in the course of which doubtless a large portion will be eliminated by natural causes. The possible final remnant will, since it will undoubtedly consist of the most resilient portions, have to be treated accordingly, because it is the product of natural selection," meaning liquidation, "and would, if released, act as the seed of a new Jewish revival." The goal was clear: to liquidate the Jews, to liquidate the Jewish people.

I am aware, of course, that the final solution had begun earlier. Already in 1941, transports from Prague to Łódź, or from Brno to Minsk, were organized, but the meeting in January 1942, was important for the Germans to coordinate the liquidation of the Jewish people, and

Reinhard Heydrich was the executioner of the Jewish people, just as he was the executioner of the Czech people, and it is a symbolic connection of our nations in this way.

I would also like to add one important thing to this, which is related to what happened on 20 January 2022, when a resolution was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly which clearly states that we must not forget the Holocaust, that the Holocaust did happen and that it is a heritage from which we should and must learn lessons. That is why I strongly condemn all manifestations of anti-Semitism, even in democratic countries. This is also the case, for example, when we visit former concentration camps. We should all realise that we can only preserve our Jewish-Christian roots if we care for them and nurture them and draw attention to the fact that they are important to all of us and that they are the fundamental value on which European civilisation is built.

For this reason, I am also very pleased that Jews in the Czech Republic perceive the Czech Republic as a country that is safe for them and that treats them favourably. I very much appreciate this, and we will do everything we can to ensure that this continues to be the case.

To conclude, allow me to comment on the words of the Hebrew scholar Yehuda Bauer, who said: "You, your children and your children's children shall never become perpetrators"; "You, your children and your children's children shall never never allow yourselves to become victims"; and "You, your children and your children's children shall never, but never, be passive onlookers to mass murder, genocide, or (let us hope it may never be repeated) to a Holocaust-like tragedy." And I think this is a very important message for the present, so that we do not become onlookers not only in the case of the Holocaust, but also in other things that are happening in Belarus or Ukraine. This is the wider overlap of today's important day, and this is the great lesson that the Second World War gave us, that the events that happened then give us, and that should be a memento for the present time.

Once again, I thank you all for coming and I wish that we can embrace those memories and that heritage and, above all, that we can behave according to the experience that arises from it.