

**The Address by Michal Klíma,
The Chairman of the Foundation for Holocaust Victim's Board of Trustees,
On the Occasion of
The Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity
Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic
January 27, 2026**

Honourable Mr. President of the Senate, dear Holocaust survivors, esteemed guests,

We gather each year on this day to commemorate the victims of the Nazi regime and bear witness to its crimes, which included the systematic extermination of the Jewish population of Germany and, gradually, of other European countries occupied by its army. While our act of remembrance remains the same, the world around us is changing.

A few years ago, the testimonies of survivors sounded like recollections of evils that time had carried away. Unfortunately, today they remind us of events we are increasingly witnessing around us. It did not end with the brutal attack by Palestinian terrorists on October 7, 2023. We are seeing ever more frequent attacks against Jews in Europe and even in the United States. And I am not speaking only of verbal hate attacks at some American universities. Just three weeks ago, the largest synagogue in the state of Mississippi was set on fire—something we could hardly have imagined happening in the United States just a few years ago.

In the Czech Republic, such extensive and dramatic attacks have not yet occurred, but even here the number of antisemitic incidents is rising sharply. Unfortunately, it is not only the actions of ignorant extremists; it also involves events at some universities. The display of Palestinian flags on the anniversary of the terrorist attack against Jewish civilians—peaceful kibbutz residents and young people at a music festival—is just one of the most abhorrent manifestations of this trend.

I believe that everyone present in this hall today is aware not only of this trend but also of the danger it entails. After all, the extermination we remember today was preceded by verbal attacks and, at first, only isolated expressions of hatred.

It is undeniable that the rising manifestations of antisemitism are occurring at a time when both older and more recent history is being relativized. The war in Ukraine has lasted “only” four years, so there is hardly anyone who does not remember who started it and how, and yet voices are already being heard that seek to excuse, downplay, relativize, or even completely deny the aggressor’s responsibility. Even more widespread is the relativization of the crimes of the communist regime, which has become common among some historians.

In this perspective, the events of more than eighty years ago have become history remembered only by a small part of society. It is therefore a great responsibility of historians, journalists, teachers, and politicians to ensure that the crimes of that time are not forgotten, are continuously recalled, and serve as a warning against their repetition.

The attempt to relativize historical events is often disguised as a supposed concern for freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is undoubtedly one of the fundamental freedoms of a democratic society. However, freedom of speech does not include lying about historical facts, distorting them, or even concealing them. Appeals to any freedom must not lead to the denial of facts, nor should they open the door to the suppression of other freedoms or to expressions of hatred.

Unfortunately, it is evident that our efforts so far, however commendable, are insufficient when it comes to remembering the past. We must stop turning a blind eye to the distortion of history and the relativization of past crimes. This is a responsibility for everyone, but of course politicians, journalists, teachers, civil society activists, and, above all, professional historians—those whose work is the study of history—can do the most to change the situation. This is not about protecting a single minority; it is about the health and future of society as a whole.

Michal Klíma

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