

**The Address of Miloš Vystrčil,
President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,
On the Occasion of
The Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Day of Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity
Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic
January 27, 2026**

Dear survivors, their families,
ladies and gentlemen,
dear fellow senators,
distinguished guests,

Eighty-one years ago, the Red Army liberated the concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. At that time, more than seven and a half thousand utterly exhausted and starved prisoners were found in the camp. Eight tons of human hair were discovered there. During the existence of the camp, 1,500,000 people were exterminated—yes, exterminated, that is the correct word—including 250,000 children and young people, more than 200,000 of whom were of Jewish origin. By order of Heinrich Himmler, Auschwitz became the center of the mass murder of Jews and subsequently also of Roma and Sinti; it became the center of the genocide of Jews, the center of the Holocaust.

Today, we commemorate this event, and I am convinced that it is our duty to ask ourselves what message the events of the Second World War carry for the present day.

After the Second World War, many countries realized that something had to be done to reduce the risk of further wars and genocide. And so we decided to build a world based on rules. Not because we believed that everyone, under all circumstances, would always abide by them. That is not the case and probably never will be. But it is a fact, and a proven one, that when we establish rules, trust among us increases and the risk of conflict is reduced—the risk that the strong will attack the weak, or that the powerful will place themselves above the small. The question today is whether we are still capable of ensuring that rules are respected. Whether we are capable of agreeing that a rules-based world reduces the risk of conflict and reduces the likelihood that emotions, force, and power will prevail. Whether we succeed depends on us. It depends on how strongly we are able to remember our past. And it also depends on how we understand and assume our responsibility. Václav Havel—and he was not alone in this—once wrote that responsibility cannot be preached; responsibility must be borne. It must be carried within us, and we must work with it.

On this sorrowful anniversary, I wish for all of us to realize this. To do everything we can to ensure, now and in the future, the inviolability of life, the inviolability of freedom, and the inviolability of property. If we succeed in this, then there is hope that rules will continue to govern the world, and that the risks of conflict and war, the dominance of emotions, and the dominance of force over justice will not prevail.

I thank all of you who have contributed to this effort and who are willing to continue doing so.

Honor to the memory of those who lost their lives, who were sacrificed, who were burned, who lost their loved ones—because they have given us the most profound legacy and the most important lesson. Let us cherish it and make use of it in our time.

Thank you for your attention.