

**Address by Petr Pavel,
President of the Czech Republic,
on the Occasion of the Holocaust Remembrance Day
and the Day of Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity,
Spanish Hall of Prague Castle,
28th January 2025**

Dear survivors,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to open our assembly today, dedicated to commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of not only the Second World War but also the Holocaust, the systematic genocide of the Jews, as well as many other ethnicities, nations, political groups, and minorities.

Unfortunately, humanity has a poor track record of learning from history, which is why we continue to commemorate events that must never be forgotten. But it is not only the events themselves we must remember, for the Second World War and the Holocaust did not happen overnight. They were the result of a gradual progression, shaped by various paths and events, which have been meticulously analyzed, particularly in the case of the Holocaust. Yet, we often overlook the very warning signs and underlying phenomena that led to these tragedies. When we look at the world today, many observe with concern the evolving security situation and the rise of political movements. Much like the 1930s, we can see the emergence of the same fertile ground from which the Holocaust eventually grew.

It is not only intolerance toward various groups and ethnicities that we face today, but also a troubling rise in the spread of misinformation, particularly through social media. Unlike traditional media, social platforms often lack effective filters to prevent the dissemination of harmful content, the content designed not only to deepen hatred but to incite violence. This creates an atmosphere that exacerbates societal divisions and animosities, which, under certain conditions, can lead to conflict or even a repetition of the tragedies we have experienced in the past.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to attend yesterday's commemorative event at Auschwitz, where many survivors, some of whom are present here today, endured unimaginable suffering. The gathering brought together over 3,000 attendees, including fifty survivors from various countries and representatives from more than fifty nations at the highest level. For me, it reaffirmed the enduring relevance of the Holocaust and the broader issue of intolerance toward

any group or ethnicity. I am grateful we are here today, not only to remember the horrors of the Holocaust, which claimed six million Jewish lives and a total of 60 million lives during the Second World War, but also to reflect on the suffering and destruction it caused worldwide—tragedies that, sadly, still echo in our world today, albeit on a smaller scale. This underscores the continued need not just to commemorate these events but to reach future generations through emotional and impactful mediums—be it film, theatre, or other forms of art. These can vividly convey the horrors of dehumanization and exclusion to those who, fortunately, have never experienced such atrocities. Let us use these tools to ensure they understand the profound danger of stripping any group or ethnicity of their humanity and place in society.

I believe these are things everyone should understand, not just on a factual level but also on an emotional level, to ensure that such atrocities are never repeated.

Thank you.