

**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
Spanish Hall, Prague castle
28th January 2025**

Dear survivors and your loved ones, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Eighty years, the length of one average human life. That is how long it has been since the end of World War II. On the one hand, it is an extraordinary achievement that a large part of Europe has not experienced conflict for so long. On the other hand, Europe still faces the consequences of ongoing wars today, and it is vitally important for us to respond correctly.

The Holocaust bears a double meaning for me, in these times more than ever before. Firstly, it is a sad, horrific memory of the genocide of the Jewish, Roma and Sinti people and other mass murders. In this sense, it is a crucial part – a pillar - of our collective memory. Secondly, or rather, at the same time, the Holocaust is also an unmissable warning as to which direction we must not take today and, conversely, which direction we must take if we are not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

That is why I am proud that the commemorative meeting for Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity, which the Czech Senate has hosted nineteen times in previous years, is being commemorated here at Prague Castle today, for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

But remembering the dark times of our past once a year is not enough. Whether it happens in the Senate, at Prague Castle, in Auschwitz or anywhere else. Preventing injustice and hatred must be a daily work that never ends. This is especially true today, at a time when the wave of hatred, envy and polarisation is sweeping across Europe. And, unfortunately, it seems that more and more people are succumbing and expressing a willingness to become part of this wave.

That is why I am pleased to be able to pay my respects and thank all those who have the courage to actively oppose this wave of hatred. In particular, I thank all the survivors who share their memories and experiences with us.

Dear survivors, your stories, your testimonies are not only a crucial part of our coming to terms with the past, but also a fundamental precondition for our correct decisions and attitudes, now and in the future. I greatly appreciate your courage, perseverance, and openness.

Today, one of the survivors, Mrs Hana Sternlicht, will speak to us in a few moments. Perhaps it was fate that the surname Sternlicht means starlight. I believe that in the face of evil, we will never again close our blinds or close our eyes to the light. I believe that, driven by the memory of the 11 million victims of the Holocaust and the many other victims of crimes against humanity, we will never again allow darkness to triumph over light.

Because we know everything, we know everything that has happened and everything that can happen. It is a stern reality that if we do nothing, if we do nothing, there is no excuse for us.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to speak to you.