

"Today is a dark day for Europe," said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, asking everyone to stand for a moment of silence upon hearing of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Brussels that took place earlier this morning. He was speaking at the start of his "Europe at a Crossroads" presentation, part of his official visit to Croatia, at Zagreb University.

"Europe does stand at a crossroads; today's event is yet more confirmation of that," said the Estonian Head of State. "We have the choice between unity and solidarity or reclusion."

"This was an attack in the very heart of Europe, which is a second capital for many of us. We stand by Belgium, our ally, in this tragedy," he confirmed.

According to President Ilves, we must remain calm and remember that those who escape war and terror are not terrorists.

"Evil and populist slogans will not give us the right answers and will not contribute to greater security in our society," emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

"Our response cannot rely on fear," he said. "Our response cannot involve closing borders within Europe, but instead consist of stronger co-operation between our security institutions with the purpose of controlling our external borders."

President Ilves described the situation of right-wing extreme forces gathering support within Europe as troublesome: "The growing popularity of extremist political forces within Europe is a challenge greater than the refugee crisis."

The Estonian Head of State recalled that more than 600,000 refugees have passed through Croatia within the last six months.

"Your response and attitude within society have been calm and responsible. Estonia, which has no refugees at its borders, has a lot to learn from you," said President Ilves, in addressing the students and lecturers of Zagreb University. The President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, also attended his lecture along with her spouse.

Office of the President  
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