

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves made the following statement today:

Dear fellow countrymen!

On this spring day, I wish to be very straightforward with you.

For me, the past week has been a source of disappointment. I am disappointed that there are people in Estonia who have no respect or esteem for their fellow citizens, or for the state and the society they live in. Nor is my disappointment relieved by the understanding that all in all, such people are very few and their activities mostly a result of provocation or instigation.

We must truthfully admit that the aim of the hate-mongers was foul – they wished that Estonians and Russians should not get along. Yet the hate-mongers are bound to be disappointed, because we shall not be drawn into discord. This is the best way to show that we are above those who manipulate us. I know that our country is rich in both wise Estonians as well as wise Russians, and I know also that neither of them are as stupid as to be affected by toothless hate-mongers.

A few days ago, I found a webpage with several snapshots of Tallinn, set up by a young woman called Maria, under an extremely relevant heading – "We are Russians, but our homeland is Estonia". Thank you, Maria!

An honest look will tell us that most of our Russian-speaking compatriots have been on Estonia's side during the troubled nights and days of the past week. You were with all of us, on

the side of order and public safety, and I thank you for that. Let us not be misled by looters who acted in the shadow of the night – they would have taken their opportunity to steal sooner or later. They will be handled efficiently by our police and our courts.

The last few days are a lesson to everyone who loves Estonia. As Estonians, we must understand that people who came here in the Soviet time and live now in the Republic of Estonia, as well as their children and grandchildren, are our fellow countrymen. I invite my fellow Estonians to see this very clearly. Also, I invite all my fellow countrymen to see Estonia as their country.

The truth is simple: all of us, who live in Estonia, will go on living here. Despite last week. Together. Side by side.

Other nations living in Estonia must understand and admit that Estonians have their own, very painful, historical experience of life under three consecutive occupying powers in the last century. We must all be able to see and understand the tragedies of others. If we are able to do that, I am firmly convinced that we are also able to agree upon our common future.

Dear fellow countrymen,

I invite you to be unwavering, dignified and amicable. If you feel that you are not always able to understand each other, then talk to each other. In this communication we need no go-betweens whose ulterior motive is to instigate quarrel between us. The Estonian state speaks to everyone, except rioters and fomenters whom we leave to the police and judges.

Let us give a new meaning to the beautiful word „nashi“, which today is unfortunately used by Kremlin propaganda for spreading false information and hostility. All those who think of Estonia as their country are our „nashi“.

It is to you I turn, saying – learn Estonian, be successful, be happy! And the state will help you. The state has a duty to you, just as you have a duty to the state.

The story of the "bronze soldier" has come to an end. The statue and the remains of the fallen soldiers will find a dignified resting place in the cemetery. And now it is time to put a stop to making use of the memory of war victims for political or other untoward gains.

Estonia is a free and democratic country. The decisions of the Estonian government can always be criticised or disputed in legal ways. Yet as President, I promise that also in the future, all attempts of illegal action against the Republic of Estonia shall be repelled without hesitation. Estonia is a self-respecting country and any attacks against it – now or in the future – shall not be tolerated.

Finally, I turn to Russia, Estonia's neighbour, with a clear message – try to remain civilised! It is not customary in Europe to demand the resignation of the democratically elected government of another sovereign country. It is not customary in Europe to use computers belonging to public institutions for cyber-attacks against another country's public institutions. In Europe, as well as in the rest of the civilised world, it is not considered possible to violate the Vienna Convention when an embassy of a small enough country is concerned.

It is customary in Europe that differences, which do now and then occur between states, are solved by diplomats and politicians, not on the streets or by computer attacks. Those are the ways of other countries, somewhere else, not in Europe.

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