

“The Estonian soldier in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq is a well-trained, brave, and dedicated warrior, whose mission is to bring security to places where hate, chaos, and violence rule,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at a meeting in Paldiski today with the members of the defence forces leaving for Iraq with the ESTPLA-15 infantry unit.

“I, and probably also you, have been asked many times, ‘Why are Estonian soldiers in Iraq? Why should Estonia be interested in what happens in that faraway country?’” said the Head of State. “The answer is simple—Iraq is not a faraway country. In today’s world, there are no faraway countries, in the 21st century everything is interconnected. An unstable and internally violent Iraq endangers its region and thereby the rest of the world. Therefore, also Estonia.”

If we here on the shores of the Gulf of Finland want to have a more secure world around us, we could just wait for the larger democratic countries to make the world safer for us, said President Ilves, and adding, “However just waiting would be amoral and unethical. It would also be short-sighted, and would be sawing the branch we are sitting on.”

“Estonia is not unethical, quite the opposite, to the best of our abilities, we try to make a contribution to make the world more peaceful. In the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq, where you are now going on a mission,” said the Head of State. “Estonia is not short-sighted. Our participation in international coalitions increases our security because those who help others can be sure that if necessary they also will be helped. Estonia has seen that this hope is not written on sand, but it actually happens.”

According to President Ilves, there are situations when it makes no sense to discuss how some war developed, whether the reasons were good or bad, actual or far-fetched.

“These are situations in which one must improve what is possible and stand between the hostile parties, even in conflicts that resemble civil wars, that are lacking clear battle lines,” said the Head of State.

“I want you to understand very clearly that you have the support and respect of the Estonian parliament, the Estonian government, the Estonian president, and most important—the

Estonian people," President Ilves affirmed.

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