

Dear people of Estonia,

Today is a national day of mourning. Today we remember those innocent people who, 69 years ago, were forcibly taken by communist military forces to a cold land far from Estonia, many of them never to see their homes again. Today we also remember all of the other victims of crimes against humanity and bow our heads to honour everyone who suffered or perished at the hands of totalitarian injustice. For us, the fortunate ones, endowed with the privilege of living in a free and independent Estonia, this is our duty and heartfelt desire.

There is no statute of limitations on crimes against humanity. We have done much work to elucidate the historical truth, as grim and unsparing as it is, and it has been essential work, helping to keep memory alive. For a small country, it is even more important – vitally so – to be able to learn from history, to understand the importance of building a sovereign state, safeguarding its independence, ensuring security and shaping a secure future – a process that would be unthinkable without international partnership, openness of government or geopolitical integration. This understanding is a function that cannot be assumed by anyone but you, dear fellow citizens. It is an understanding that all of the innocent victims of 50 years of occupation demand of us: such crimes must never be allowed to happen again. This will guarantee that Estonia indeed lasts through the ages.

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