

Today, the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, drove to Haapsalu, where 10 children perished in a tragic fire yesterday in an orphanage.

The Head of State met with Mr. Neeme Suur, Lääne County Governor, Mr. Urmas Sukles, the Mayor of Haapsalu, the organiser of rescue works, Mr. Priit Laos, and Police Commander of Haapsalu, Mr. Margus Kaldma, who provided an overview of the rescue works and solutions that were found to the main problems of Haapsalu Children's Home, including the provision of temporary accommodation for the children.

“Such a catastrophe – the most tragic fire in recent memory – should not have happened in the first place. As far as we know, all the measures to avoid it had been taken, but still it happened, President Ilves said. “We need a thorough analysis, as soon as possible, that will help us to avoid similar events being repeated in the future.”

The Head of State also visited the site of the tragedy, where he lit a memorial candle and met with the employees of Haapsalu Children's Home.

“I understand your pain and mourning, which is shared by everyone in Estonia,” President Ilves said. “You did everything you could during the fire, just like you are doing now. May you gain strength in the knowledge that the children need you and the care you provide.”

The Head of State thanked all the volunteers, including the members of reserve rescue team and the members of the Defence League, who went to assist the rescuers and those affected by the tragedy in temperatures of minus 20 degrees.

“I would also like to thank everyone who is with the family of Haapsalu Children's Home in this tragic hour, in words or especially in deeds. They need our support; they need their safe home.”

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