

During the night of 14 June 1941, thousands of Estonian families were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to Siberia in cattle wagons. The perpetrators took no notice of the age, health or gender of the deportees. This was the way of the occupation regime to eliminate the “socially dangerous element”, which amounted to nothing more than violence against the ordinary, active citizens and their family members.

Scarcely a year had passed since the young Republic of Estonia had been occupied – scarcely a year, during which the President of the Republic, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, members of the government and members of the parliament had already been repressed, and now the time had come for the rest: the tag of “dangerous element” was attached to babies and octogenarians, pregnant mothers and little boys.

Words cannot express the despair felt by the people sent off towards an unknown destination, with nothing but ephemeral hope of surviving and returning to homeland. What must the mothers and fathers have felt, seeing their children crammed in cattle wagons alongside themselves? These mothers and fathers, women and men had little chance of seeing their loved ones again. More than half of the tens of thousands deported in June 1941 perished or were executed; of the 3500 men who were torn from their families and interned in prison camps, only 200 or so survived. Numbers are just numbers; even numbers as eloquent as these can never convey the emotions and heart-wrenching pain behind them.

Today we mourn.

Today is the day to remember the deportation night 67 years ago, and reflect on other repressions. In those terrible nights we were a freedomless nation deprived of its statehood. Let us not forget the price that the citizens of Estonia have paid for the freedom of our Republic, and let us remember forever the sacrifices that our nation has had to make because of the freedom lost.

Today we can stand up and say: our national independence is the guarantee of our freedom. Therefore, let us remember our history and treasure our memories. Let us love, honour and cherish our country!

President of the Republic

Toomas Hendrik Ilves      Speaker of the Riigikogu

Ene Ergma                  Prime Minister

Andrus Ansip