

My respect and reverence belong to my co-countrymen, who were held hostage, for their resilience and willpower. I also bow in acknowledgement of the determination and patience of their next of kin.

I would like to extend my words of gratitude to all the officials of Estonia, who contributed to solving this hostage crisis, and above all, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Information Board and the Security Police. You were all extremely professional, inventive and committed.

I would also like to thank Estonia's foreign partners and friends, whose acts contributed to releasing the seven Estonians, who were kidnapped on 23 March in the Bequaa Valley; without your help, it would all have been much more complicated.

I feel happy and relieved to remove from my lapel the yellow ribbon, which expressed our faith and hope for the seven Estonians to be released. I have the pleasure of saying to seven of our co-countrymen: welcome back home.

Toomas Hendrik Ilves
President of the Republic