

Dear next of kin of Warrant Officer Eerik Salmus and Sergeant Raivis Kang,
respected member of the Defence Forces.

Once again, Estonia is mourning its fallen soldiers. The poet Betti Alver once wrote, as if in honour of these two young men:

“In the name of life
you stand for the living.
In the name of the living
you’ll defy fate
if required.”

Eerik Salmus and Raivis Kang – these brave soldiers – stood for the living, and in the name of life, defied fate.

We are not battling in a strangers’ war in Afghanistan. The UN and NATO, and, therefore, also Estonia are fighting there to enable a failed country to stand on its own feet again, for anger not to spread and destroy, and for the world to be a safer and more peaceful place.

We are fighting there for the future.

But this is a war, which makes soldiers – including Estonian soldiers – feel helpless. One doesn’t often see the enemy; although it feels like they’re everywhere. The frontline is invisible, therefore – everywhere. And new explosives are placed by morning, on roads that were cleared the previous day.

This is a war that cannot be won swiftly. Good soldiers and an effective strategy are required to win this war. Winning requires the commitment of many countries, despite the losses. And, of course, domestic support is needed.

Estonian soldiers can be found in the most difficult, dangerous, and most crucial locations in Afghanistan. This means that our soldiers are brave and courageous, that the allies trust our Defence Force members, and that they’re doing a great job and won’t back down.

And we can’t back down. This would mean presenting evil with the opportunity to advance further, through international terrorist attacks and enabling it to expand its drugs network, even to Estonia.

Apart from sound training, reliable equipment and the understanding of their next of kin, our soldiers require the complete support of Estonia.

They’ve made their brave choice voluntarily, but we should still always remember that their choice was to serve their country – the biggest privilege and duty – and to face grave threats for that purpose.

Therefore, I invite all my fellow countrymen to support the soldiers, who are fighting far away

from home, for Estonia, both in our minds and with our words. They are fighting for us. And we form their rear, in the widest possible meaning of this word.

I do believe I can understand how difficult it is for the next of kin of Erik Salmus and Raivis Kangi to live without them. It may even seem impossible today. However, we must be able to go on and to remain strong. For the memory of these brave soldiers and good men.

I bow my head.