

On this night 69 years ago, fists and boots pounded on doors all over Estonia. People were given scant time to pack a few things, families were separated, and a long journey into the unknown began. Dear fellow Estonians,

On this night 69 years ago, fists and boots pounded on doors all over Estonia. People were given scant time to pack a few things, families were separated, and a long journey into the unknown began. For many of those deported, it was a journey from which they would never return.

In one night, the Soviet occupying forces tore 45,000 people in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from their homes and spirited them into the unknown. Forty-five thousand different lives and destinies – mothers and fathers, children and classmates, friends and neighbours – all changed for ever.

For many, it was the last night they spent together with their loved ones; the view from the barred window of a cattle car their last glimpse of their homeland.

In one summer night, the occupation forces tried to sow terror into the hearts of three nations. They attempted to destroy our civic courage, and excise our determination to be independent.

They failed. The occupation powers proved weaker than our memory and our hope. Our memory kept alive the idea of independence, sustained our hope and did not let us fade out of existence.

Even now, we must not forget what was done here during the occupations.

We cannot close our eyes to the mass murders, deportations, plundering of nature or disfiguring of our spirit.

Anyone who does so, who does not wish to remember, fears the truth. They use fighting words and make threats, but in fact they are afraid.

Remembering is the greatest due we can pay to all of the victims of the night of 14 June, the shattered destinies, the un-lived lives, the unborn children.

Estonia lost many people due to the occupations and the war. But Estonia survived.

Our enemies, those who would divide and rule the world, have disappeared from maps of the world.

These regimes have ceased to exist. We, on the other hand, are still here.

We carry on, forgiving, but never forgetting.

On this national Day of Mourning we must above all think how to prevent such crimes from ever being repeated in Estonia, Europe and the world. We must understand that this time of wanton disrespect for life was made possible only because the world tolerated and appeased totalitarianism. Back then, democratic countries opted for a pragmatic approach and failed to

stand up against totalitarianism until it was too late.

Dear friends.

Today we remember all of our countrymen and countrywomen who suffered the tyranny of foreign powers and the iniquity of totalitarian regimes. We remember those who are interred in foreign soil, far from home. And we express our deepest respect for those who emerged from the punishing ordeal of labour camps, carrying Estonia in their hearts every step of the way.

Thank you.