



Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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Address of H.E. Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga at the Remembrance Event of the Victims of Communistic Genocide at the Monument of Freedom

Dear repressed people,

Everybody present,

Today Latvia has a national day of mourning; it is the mourning day when all Latvia decline their heads to those innocent victims who without any warning, without any grounds, without any justification were brutally torn out of their lives, out of their homes and in inhuman conditions sent to a far and very heavy exile from which very many people did not return and others returned with damaged health. Innumerable families were torn and pulled apart, innumerable children became orphans, and innumerable kins were destroyed.

Along with these first deportations the first but not the last heavy wound was made in the live flesh of the Latvian people. It was genocide against humanity, it was genocide against the Latvian people. Among the deported we find people of different ethnic backgrounds of that time, more than 85% of them were Latvians, thus it can be clearly seen that the destruction was directly aimed at the Latvian people, however there were also Jews, Germans and representatives of other nationalities. It affected all inhabitants of Latvia and some proportionally more than it could have been expected from their number in Latvia at that moment.

We must remember this crime against humanity, we must honour the survivors of this time who are still alive and we must teach our children about what happened and what the experiences of all the Latvian people are because what was experienced by the adults and old people then brought to Siberia, by those who are still alive today and who were only children then – that is not just their experience, that is our common pain and common sorrow and therefore all of us come together today, remember those tragic events and decline our heads to victims. But we also resolve that now in our free Latvia we will take care that this never repeats. That is the most important what we must remember these days and carry forward – not only remember and show compassion and honour to those who have been persecuted and have suffered, not only teach our children what has happened, but also introduce in the European culture heritage and awareness what the course of life of the Latvian nation and its experiences are because all of us now in the united Europe must understand that we are one family.

We wish that others in every European place would understand what we have experienced and why. And that is what we are doing and explaining both on the diplomatic level as well as through the masterpieces of art. I am glad that today the events will take place and works of music performed for the first time that helps us explain this suffering and emotional experiences in a human way. We must also understand that other people have their suffering and emotional experiences and we must not forget to show solidarity with them and compassion with their suffering.

Let us all be united in our humanity to be able to expect that others understand our pain and suffering. Let us be prepared to be interested and understand what other people have suffered and lived through. Then all of us together will be able to create the Europe where such things will never have to repeat. However, mainly we ourselves have to take

care that Latvia is safe. That it has the ability to defend itself. That there is never again such humiliation that our own army people must watch as a foreign army comes in and takes our land over. We never want to allow that again. We also do not want to allow that our men and boys go and fight under false uniforms and fall in false fights. If they head somewhere they will do it in their own uniforms and under Latvian colours and namely because we understand that it benefits Latvian security.

Most importantly, we must remember that all of it happened to destroy Latvia as an independent state and all information and suspicion about its existence. What we are making it like today and what we are showing it like to the world is in our hands. If we want the world to respect us let us start with the very first – let us start with the respect towards ourselves, towards our country and the symbols of our country. On this day I would like to remind that why so many people suffered and died was for Latvia. Now everybody who blasphemes the independent Latvian state, everybody who blasphemes the symbols of the independent Latvian state, blasphemes all those who have suffered for him. I remind everybody – for us the self-respect, tolerance, understanding and concord are the only things with which we will be able to build our state, with which it will stand on a secure foundation and will not be threatened by enemies either from outside or inside. I wish everybody on this day of mourning to think over what we are like and what we wish to become like.