



Latvijas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja  
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**Speech of the President of Latvia at the Memorial of the Victims of Genocide  
against the Jews on 4 July 2016**

Dear Madam Speaker of the Saeima,  
Dear Mr Suharenko and the Community of the Council of Latvian Jewish Congregations and  
Communities,  
Dear Community of Latvian Jewish People,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Holocaust, the disaster of Jewish people, is also a part of the history of our country,  
Latvia, and our nation. Today here, at the place, where the choral synagogue was located in  
Riga, we commemorate all fellow human beings, who were persecuted and killed only  
because they were Jews.

During these days, we also commemorate passing away of legendary Mr Eli Wiesel, survivor  
of the horrors of the Holocaust. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Eli Wiesel was one of those  
persons, who drew the world's attention to the necessity and significance of memorizing the  
Holocaust nowadays tirelessly. His contribution has created the system of values of the  
current era.

The Holocaust is the anguish of the Jews, and it is a common tragedy for us all, for entire  
Latvia as well that we feel acutely especially on annual commemoration days. Thousands of  
our fellow human beings were killed in the massacre started 75 years ago.

Madness of the Holocaust, crime of the Holocaust were introduced and organized from  
outside. Alongside the foreign war, it reached the land of Latvia in 1941 as well. The State of  
Latvia was destroyed. It was damaged by criminal superpowers treacherously - the Soviets  
and the Nazis. Unfortunately, the Holocaust did not take place without local collaborators  
and executors of the crimes either. These crimes do not have any lapse and excuse.

This memorial site is a reminder to us to be vigilant and reflect today on what had happened.  
It is the place for our moral and ethical clarity. Understanding that is of utmost importance  
for us, who did not witness that time and was not even born yet.

Unfortunately, the world is still experiencing genocide, ethnic cleansing and is confronted  
with racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. Acts of aggression and seizure of foreign lands  
occur.

Therefore, we still must study those events very thoroughly. Heroes of those times, rescuers  
of Jews, should be remembered as well. According to research of eminent historian and  
witness of the Holocaust Mārgers Vestermanis, their number was more than 600 persons.

Museum "Jews in Latvia" established by Mr Vestermanis, which I will visit today, is an  
important documentation centre that holds thousands of historical items. It is very important  
for everybody so that those testimonies do not disappear and they are passed on. The  
Museum preserves the memory of the persons killed.

It is important that it is also studies people, who rescued people, rescued Jews under real life  
danger for themselves and their families during the Holocaust in spite of the cruel Nazi

regime. Today I will also visit Žanis Lipke Memorial Museum in Ķīpsala that keeps testimonies and memories about those brave people.

I wish to emphasize Latvia's unequivocal condemnation of any contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism. The position of Latvian people on this matter was confirmed in the declaration "On Inadmissibility of Genocide and Anti-Semitism in Latvia" that is one of the first documents adopted after restoration of Latvia's independence. However, we still witness on a daily basis how fragile the border of understanding is about other cultures and religions. Everybody must be aware of their responsibility if appeals to intolerance and hatred are declared.

The war and the occupations during the previous century were a series of crime that wiped out lives of people and destroyed countries. Only the Truth is a real power, and we all must know it. We can overcome this tragedy and proceed only based on truth and decency.

Eternal memory to the victims of the Holocaust, tragedy for both the Jews and entire Latvia!