



Speech delivered by Ambassador Christoph Retzlaff,
on January 25, 2017
Holocaust Remembrance Day 2017

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Today we remember the liberation of the concentration camp at Auschwitz, freed by Red Army soldiers on 27 January 1945, 72 years ago. The word *Auschwitz* conjures up millions of individual stories. Each one describes in its own way incomprehensible suffering and unspeakable cruelty culminating in systematic murder. The gruesome barbarity exhibited in the mass extermination of life at Auschwitz is beyond our imagination. But we do know one thing: the unimaginable happened; it was possible.



What happened at Auschwitz was a fundamental attack on what it means to be a human being, an assault on human dignity. A fanatical ideology denied people their humanity. Today we remember all the victims of a criminal ideology, all those who were robbed of their lives – in a material, spiritual and physical sense – and stripped of their human dignity: the persecuted, the tortured, the humiliated, the murdered.

We remember the six million Jews killed, the Sinti and Roma, the forced labourers, the prisoners of war left to starve, those euthanized by the state, the homosexuals, all those who were persecuted and fell victim to a murderous regime.

Days of shared remembrance can bring societies together and help these reflect upon their histories. Without a doubt the most important lesson to be learned from the Holocaust is: “Never again!”

That message has become a fundamental tenet for Germany. The memory of our history shapes how we see ourselves today. Taking frank ownership of our difficult past has been good for Germany.

Our commitment is firmly rooted in our awareness of the immeasurable importance of freedom and the rule of law, pluralism and tolerance, However, these values are as fragile as they are precious. They require our constant vigilance and our committed effort. To begin with, this means exposing old and new prejudices and stereotypes for what they are.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Remembrance imposes a duty – the Holocaust cannot and will not be forgotten in its monstrous singularity. Auschwitz reminds us each and every day that our mutual coexistence depends on our shared humanity. Auschwitz concerns all of us – today and tomorrow, not just on remembrance days and not just in countries in which the Holocaust took place. Racist ideologies that insult and disadvantage others can never be justified. Standing by while human rights are violated is repugnant and will only propagate more violence. Only if human dignity is respected and solidarity is upheld, will our communities flourish in peace.

Thank you .