

Dear Minister,

Dear Mr Bilinkis and members of KEDEM,

Excellencies,

Dear guests,

Thank you very much for the invitation for today's event on the commemoration of the Holocaust and of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp 75 years ago.

It is very important for me to be with you today, and I am thankful to be given this opportunity to speak to you.

75 years ago, with the liberation of the German concentration camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau unspeakable horrors and crimes against humanity came to an end in one of the most notorious places. As you all know, there were other similar places. And there were other ways and means used by representatives of Nazi Germany to torture, to kill, to abuse and to denigrate countless human beings because of their religion, their ethnicity or their political beliefs or for no particular reason at all.

As President Steinmeier underlined last week in Yad Vashem [and I quote]:

“The perpetrators were human beings. They were Germans. Those who murdered, those who planned and helped in the murdering, the many who silently toed the line: They were Germans.” [unquote]

Therefore, for us there remains only one answer: Never again! There cannot be an end to remembrance. Not in Germany and not in other places.

Today, apart from commemorating the victims of the holocaust and reminding ourselves to resist the poisons of totalitarianism, racism and antisemitism in all its shapes and forms we're also honouring righteous amongst the nations from the Republic of Moldova, the United States of America, Japan, and Germany; people who held up the torch of humanity during dark and trying times.

“Whoever saves but one human life, saves the world” says the Talmud.

We remember Margarete Sommer who refused to subscribe to the racist Nazi ideology and subsequently lost her employment. She ended up saving Jews from deportation through her work at the Relief Agency.

We remember Irene Block who used her connections to procure forged medical certificates to her Jewish client and when that failed, hid her for two years in her own home.

And we remember August Ruf and Eugen Weiler, both pastors, who escorted a fleeing Jewish woman and helped her successfully across the Swiss border. Both men were arrested later and spent years in prison and a concentration camp themselves.

These people – and others – acted with true humanity and dignity in very challenging circumstances. Whether it was through hiding those persecuted, covering their tracks, supplying them with everyday necessities or forging their papers – they did what they could to save innocent lives.

75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz there are few people among us who survived the horrors of the camp and also few of those who helped save lives.

That makes it all the more important to keep the memory alive, to see the examples exhibited here today and to learn from them. To learn, that it is possible to show moral courage, to protect others and to do the right thing.

Let me conclude by thanking KEDEM for the close and productive partnership on this project and others with the German Embassy here in Chisinau.