**After the holocaust and even nowadays we hear many leaders all over the world speaking about this dark period of humanity, emphasizing the importance of this memory and deriving from this will the desire to prevent it.**

**I quote parts of a speech of the former Federal President, Doctor honoris causa Joachim Gauck, German president from 2012 till 2017, on the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of National Socialism on 27th January 2015 in Berlin at the German Bundestag, our Parliament.**

**He said in his annual speech on this day - Start of quote:**

*“I recall a ceremony on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The speakers at the event included Thomas Buergenthal, who had survived the death march from Auschwitz to Sachsenhausen when he was not quite eleven years old.*

*He emigrated to the United States after the war, where he became a lawyer specializing in international law and human rights, and took part in the prosecution of genocide as a judge at the International Court of Justice.*

*At the time I was haunted by his words, for he confronted the audience with an uncomfortable truth. Buergenthal asked how much the vow of “never again”, the core promise after Auschwitz, was really worth. Has genocide not occurred many times since? What about Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur, Buergenthal asked? What about Srebrenica, we might have added? Today, we could ask: what about Syria and Iraq, and all the other sites of horror?
Even if the crimes here have not occurred on the same scale as the Nazis’ deeds, Thomas Buergenthal said, it is terribly dispiriting when genocide and mass murder become almost a matter of routine, when the world says “never again”, but shuts its eyes to the next genocide.*

*Might I ask that we move beyond simply establishing this unsettling and depressing fact, and inquire further: are we capable of preventing mass murder from happening in the first place, and are we willing to do so? To what extent are we able to end or punish such crimes? Isn’t the will to take action against such crimes against humanity perhaps lacking sometimes?*

*The fact that genocide has been a prosecutable offense since 1948 – that is, since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide – is a great success. International criminal tribunals have taken action on multiple occasions. They can investigate anyone who intends to, I quote, “destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such”.*

*At the same time, this development confronts us with the bitter realization that punishments rarely have a deterrent effect and that prevention has thus far rarely taken place soon enough. Once murderous acts have begun to gain momentum, it is difficult to stop them. In many cases, it is even impossible to help. Because we are not all-powerful, we must live with the moral burden of knowing we are unable to protect human life always or everywhere. Just as shalom, the state of boundless and eternal happiness, cannot be attained on earth, the vow of “never again” cannot be entirely fulfilled. However, it remains indispensable as a moral imperative and an internal compass.*

*Striving for the peaceful and just coexistence of people and nations is an important – likely the most important – guiding principle for the coexistence of nations, and an important guiding principle for our actions. And while we are unable to hold evil completely at bay, we are called upon to proscribe it and to work to stop it from getting so far.*

*Future generations will certainly seek new forms of commemoration. And while the Holocaust will not necessarily be among the central components of German identity for everyone in our country, it will still hold true that there is no German identity without Auschwitz. Remembering the Holocaust remains a matter for every citizen of Germany. It is part and parcel of our country’s history. And something specific remains: here in Germany, where every day we walk past houses from which Jews were deported; here in Germany, where the annihilation was planned and organized; here, the horrors of the past are nearer and the responsibility for today and tomorrow more present and more binding than elsewhere.*

*In many a conversation and many a study, I encounter the fear that the younger generation will lose interest in Nazi crimes. I do not share this concern, but I am aware that the examination of the past will continue to change, and that it has to do so. Many direct witnesses repressed the past, and their children bemoaned this repression. Now we are shifting to the generation of the grandchildren. What we are seeing now with the grandchildren is that greater distance can certainly be an advantage. Today’s young people often can more openly and fully face a past that is tainted with shame. I never cease to be surprised by the extent to which grandchildren and great-grandchildren are willing to research their taboo-ridden, buried family histories; investigate the Jewish history of the buildings and neighborhoods where they live; and immerse themselves in the biographies of the persecuted and their persecutors. And in the stories of people who rescued Jews they do not only see moral examples; they also see a rebuttal of the old assertion that there was nothing that could be done to stop it.”*

**I skip a small part and continue**

*“’People dealt this fate to people’: in these plain yet alarming words, Polish writer Zofia Nałkowska took stock of what she had seen right after the liberation of the concentration camps as a member of the international special committee for the investigation of Nazi crimes in Poland. This universal dimension of the Holocaust led the United Nations to decide in 2005 to designate an annual International Day of Commemoration to honor the victims of the Holocaust – as a duty of people to people.”*

**End of quote**

# And let me just cite the Holocaust survivor Max Mannheimer, who passed away on 23rd September 2016, aged 96, who said:

*"You are not responsible for what happened. But for the fact that it will not happen again."*

**End of quote**