

Minister of Justice Kalle Laanet
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Dear fellow citizens, honoured guests and good companions in thought and fate!

'Our room has a black ceiling and so does our time...' Juhan Liiv wrote more than 100 years ago.

Now our seaside has a black wall. As does our time.

I have heard the criticism that we Estonians have a victim mentality. There is some truth in that as well – people are different, even within such a small nation.

But the main essence of our attitudes and actions is remembrance – just like this field here and this black wall. Seen through the lens of memory and commemoration, they represent a visible and palpable part of Europe's modern history.

We remember because the current situation – with Europe still plagued by war – is proof that many do not remember or do not want to remember.

I ask again today the question that has been repeatedly asked during the past 15 months: why do most Europeans only listen to us and our immediate neighbours here on the Russian border, in the interest of a united Europe, during times of crisis?

Behind us on the wall, the years from 1939 to 1949 are repeated more frequently.

Onwards to Europe and from Europe:

1953 – Germany!

1956 – Hungary!

1968 – Czechoslovakia!

1979 – Afghanistan!

1994 – Chechnya!

1999 – Chechnya!

2008 – Georgia!

2014 – Ukraine!

2015 – Syria!

and

2022 – the occupation continued, and a full-scale war was waged against Ukraine – all because no one remembered.

No one remembered that line I just read out loud again.

As a long-time defender of law and order and the state, I would remind each of us of the principle of criminal law that applies in many free countries: turning a blind eye to a crime or forgetting is complicity in the crime.

Yes, we were also attacked, occupied, killed, tortured and deported, but we fought to become free again. It is crystal clear that keeping this freedom would not have been possible alone, neither

for us nor for our closest neighbours. Even our bigger brothers, the Finns, have joined us to ensure their own independence.

Why now, then? 80 years after the Winter War and the Continuation War?

The Swedes are awaiting their turn. Why now, then? 300 years after the Great Northern War?

This is due to the fact that the empire of evil, as Ronald Reagan referred to our eastern neighbour in its former incarnation, has attacked, killed, tortured, raped, deported and robbed... and continues to do so repeatedly. They send their agents to the yards and homes of friendly neighbours to prepare for murder, rape, robbery, destruction...

To put an end to this once and for all, we must remember! To remember not only on anniversaries, not only by laying wreaths.

We must remember when making our everyday choices, setting aside our immediate needs to be supportive and helpful to our allies.

Tomorrow we celebrate Europe Day - a kind of counterbalance to the cult of war. On the threshold of this day, I say: yes, we have had victims, many victims, and some of the victims' names are written on our black wall. But as a nation, we are not victims. As a nation, we embody the desire expressed by Gustav Suits: being Estonians, we are Europeans. We were already Europeans during the *Silver White* era described by Lennart Meri and for thousands of years before the concept of Europe even existed.

To ensure that this remains the case forever, I will conclude with some words that have become familiar to us all: **Слава Україні!**