

## Solemn Declaration on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz



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Martin Schulz

Dear colleagues,

70 years ago, on the 27th of January 1945, Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated by Soviet troops. What the liberators saw shocked the world as a whole and continues to do so to this day. The heaps of corpses, the piles of shoes and human hair, the evidence of stolen lives, the thin, hungry survivors, the proximity of death has been stamped on the collective memory of humankind.

For most of the Auschwitz inmates, liberation came too late. More than a million people were murdered in that camp. Through hunger, disease, torture, execution, appalling medical experiments and the killing system of the gas chambers. In particular Jews from Holland, Poland, Greece, and other countries. Roma people, disabled people, sick people, homosexuals, political prisoners, prisoners of war and, as anyone who has been to Auschwitz will have witnessed, countless children. All of these peoples were declared sub-human by Nazi ideologists. They were not deemed to have a right to live. Their lives were to be destroyed and these people exterminated.

This organized mass murder was centred on Auschwitz but Auschwitz was by no means the only camp of its kind. Auschwitz is a reminder to humanity. It will always be a cry of desperation and warning to humanity. The responsibility carried by those who committed the crimes has been taken with them to their graves. However, we all share a collective responsibility to ensure that this never happens again. All of us, who belong to subsequent generations, will carry this responsibility forever.

History does not repeat itself but the past breeds the present and the way we deal with history will determine our future. That is why we want to know why the unimaginable happened in Auschwitz, day after day. That is why human dignity must be inviolable for us and every day we must counter ideas and ideologies that we thought we had overcome: Hate, xenophobia, intolerance, anti-Semitism. We thought they were gone, but seventy years on from the liberation of Auschwitz, Jews in Europe still fear for their safety. That is something that must frighten us and we need to resist that fear. We need to ensure that this hatred does not become contagious.

I consider the recent events of Paris as an example. We have to resist the growing level of mistrust. Seventy years on from the liberation of Auschwitz we must fight for the rights of each and every human being. That is the task that we should consider our own. In this parliament of many nations, that is our very special duty.

**For further information:**

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