

One cannot live with hate

Speech by Prime Minister Dick Schoof at the National Holocaust Remembrance ceremony in Amsterdam, 26 January 2025

Ladies and gentlemen,

For 40 years, Gerhard Durlacher, an Auschwitz survivor, was able to 'draw a veil' over his 'history in the inferno', as he put it.

For 40 years, he kept silent on the hell he had endured.

Out of self-protection.

Until finally, in later life, he began to write about it.

He felt he had to.

So that he would not be caught up and overwhelmed by the dark shadows of his past.

And so that he could issue a warning.

He wrote: '(...) I feel that I must not forget, that this story must not disappear into the void, that future generations must understand where discrimination, indifference and the absence of respect for other human beings can lead us.'

Ladies and gentlemen, the overwhelming majority of us belong to those future generations.

And it is bitterly painful to observe, as we begin this year commemorating 80 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz extermination camp, that antisemitism still persists.

In fact, it only seems to be growing more pervasive.

More visible.

More palpable.

Here too, in the streets of Amsterdam, a city that for centuries has been shaped in so many ways by the presence of its Jewish residents and their traditions.

May that presence remain visible here.

Or rather: that presence *must* remain visible, because hate can never be allowed to prevail.

In the words, once again, of Gerhard Durlacher, 'I cannot live with hate.'
That attitude later inspired the title of a book, *One Cannot Live with Hate*.
And given his own life story, it is one of extraordinary humanity.
One for which we – those future generations – cannot fail to feel great admiration and deep respect.
When an Auschwitz survivor can succeed in living without hate, it should be a lesson to us all.
We too must refuse to tolerate hate.
Instead we must *combat* it, with all our strength.
Wherever antisemitism or any other form of discrimination or exclusion rears its head.
Because wherever hate grows, people lose each other.
We lose each other.

The painful reality is that the attacks of 7 October 2023, and all the subsequent violence and anguish, have also fuelled hate.
The pain is felt by many, and it is a source of **division**: all over the world, and here in our own country too.
And while the past week has brought a spark of hope, it cannot suddenly dissolve all the tensions.
We still face the question of how to bridge differences and heal wounds.
I can't offer any simple solutions either.

But whatever can – and must – be said *today* about Israel and Gaza, let us not allow it to detract from the *history* of the Holocaust.
To weigh up that suffering against the suffering of people today does justice to no one.
Today especially..
Because the six million people who were murdered because of who they were – including more than 102,000 Dutch people whose names are inscribed on the National Holocaust Names Memorial near this spot – will be forever innocent.
Trampled and crushed in the murderous machinery of the Shoah.
Today we mourn them and honour their memory.

Fortunately, new generations of young people continue to do so, a sign that the memory of the war will never die.

Our descendants must know this history and keep it alive.

Not forget it, but continue to commemorate it.

Because we cannot live with hate.