

**Address
of the President of the Republic of Croatia Mr. Stjepan Mesić at the opening
of the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem**

Mr. President of the State of Israel,
Distinguished Presidents and Prime Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As a rule museums are places where they keep beautiful and praiseworthy things. One goes to museums in order to enjoy the exhibits. The Museum which is now being opened in Jerusalem differs completely from the standard understanding of a museum. It preserves the memory of something indescribably and incomprehensibly horrible. When visiting it, regardless of all previous knowledge of history, one is left speechless when faced with the truth about what some people were capable of doing to other people – only and exclusively because they were different, because they belonged to another race, nation and religion.

Terrible and distressing, the Holocaust History Museum must be visited. Its exhibits must be seen. In order not to forget. Because if we are sure that this will not be forgotten, we can hope that it will never again be repeated, that nobody will ever suffer again!

The crime of the Holocaust is unique in the history of mankind. It cannot and may not be compared with anything else. Originating in Nazi Germany, it is – as it were – the ideological offspring of Nazism and of the theory about the racial supremacy of some peoples and the racial inferiority of others. Unfortunately, it took place not only in the Third Reich and the countries occupied by the Nazis, but also in countries which were their allies.

In the Second World War most of Europe was the scene of the Holocaust. Including the country from which I come – Croatia. In my country Jews were also victims of persecution and murder only because they were Jews. Most of the Jewish population of Croatia perished at the time. Some managed to join the anti-fascist partisan movement which saved Croatia's honour with its fight against the occupying forces and their abettors.

The state which I have the privilege to lead draws on the anti-fascist traditions of the Second World War and guarantees full equality to all its citizens.

We shall soon mark the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against Nazism. One would think that enough time has elapsed for the truth of the events during World War Two to definitively break through and consolidate. Unfortunately, this has not always and everywhere been the case.

The revisionists of history are active and aggressive.
Anti-Semitism is raising its ugly head again.

And the indifference of the young with respect to past events can make them susceptible to the arguments of those who, in spite of everything, deny the crime and even glorify the criminals.

The crime happened. And must never happen again. This can only be assured by persistent dissemination of the truth about the past.

Some will accept the truth and face it bravely, aware that lies are not a suitable foundation for building the future. Others will accept it, as it were, under coercion and try to hide it – wherever possible and as much as possible. And some will close their eyes to the truth, turn the other way in order to avoid seeing what simply cannot be denied.

During the Holocaust many people also turned the other way and closed their eyes. Later on many claimed that they had had no idea of what was happening. But there were also people who helped and saved others. Israel is paying homage to them, the Righteous Among the Nations.

I note with pride that in Croatia, too, there were courageous people prepared to jeopardize their own security in order to offer a saving hand to those in mortal danger.

I am grateful for the invitation to take part in the opening of the Holocaust History Museum. I believe it gives credit to me as well as to my own country – Croatia. On this very spot, I would like to repeat that I will continue to fight for truth about the past, stand against all attempts to suppress, conceal or fabricate the past, whatever it may have been. I will fight for tolerance towards those who happen to be different for any reason, against discrimination of any kind and for the equality of all people.

So that the events of which this Museum reminds us should never happen again, anywhere and to anyone.

Thank you!