



Memorial ceremony for the victims of right-wing extremist violence

A memorial ceremony for the victims of right-wing extremist violence is being held in the Konzerthaus on Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 23 February 2012. The memorial ceremony, to which all constitutional organs have issued a joint invitation, is intended to demonstrate unity and our determination to combat all forms of xenophobia and violence. Bundesrat President Horst Seehofer will be taking part in the memorial ceremony in his capacity as acting Federal President in line with Article 57 of the Basic Law.

This memorial ceremony is being held to mark ten murders which, it was discovered last year, had a right-wing extremist background, provoking outrage and shock both in Germany and abroad. At the ceremony, the ten murder victims will be remembered, as will those injured during the two Cologne bomb attacks and all other victims of right-wing extremist violence in Germany. Relatives of the victims and others affected by the terrorist attacks will take part in the ceremony.

Around 1200 guests are expected. In addition to those who hold Germany's highest offices and Members of the German Bundestag, numerous Ministers-President and representatives of the Federal Länder will be present, as will the ombudspersons for the victims and their families appointed by the Federal Government and the Länder. A delegation from the Turkish Parliament's Human Rights Committee and a great number of members of the Diplomatic Corps will also attend. Other invitees include volunteers from action groups and alliances which are seeking to combat xenophobic violence and to foster democracy, as well as school classes and sports clubs which are committed to integration. To mark the ceremony, employers and trade unions have called for a minute of silence for the victims at 12 noon.

Chancellor Angela Merkel will deliver an address, while Semiya Şimşek and Gamze Kubaşık, both daughters of murder victims, will speak on behalf of the families.

The international Berlin University of the Arts Orchestra will play pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach and Cemal Resit Rey, the pioneer of modern classical music in Turkey. The renowned music producer Mousse T. (Mustafa Gündoğdu) has specially arranged a medley of two "modern classic" pieces, "Fragile" by Sting and "Imagine" by John Lennon, for the ceremony. Iris Berben and Erol Sander will recite poetry, thus establishing a link between grief, an appeal against violence and a call for us all to live together in peace and tolerance.

Former Federal President Christian Wulff agreed with the other constitutional organs to hold this ceremony on 23 February 2012. The ceremony was discussed during President Wulff's meeting at Schloss Bellevue last November with the families of the murder victims and with those injured in a series of crimes with a right-wing extremist background.

You will find the programme for the ceremony at www.bundespraesident.de/Gedenkveranstaltung