



**Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at the memorial service for the victims  
of the attack in Hanau on 19 February 2020  
in Hanau  
on 4 March 2020**

Every word is both too much and yet too little. Who could comfort those who have been robbed of those they loved most?

Today we remember our murdered compatriots Ferhat Unvar, Mercedes Kierpacz, Sedat Gürbüz, Gökhan Gültekin, Hamza Kurtović, Kaloyan Velkov, Vili-Viorel Păun, Said Nesar Hashemi, Fatih Saraçoğlu and the mother of the attacker, Gabriele Rathjen, who was also among the victims.

Ten people, ten life stories, ten future dreams intentionally and brutally wiped out. Murderous terrorism struck most of them in a shisha bar. In a place where they felt safe, where they didn't have to explain themselves. They are not coming back.

They are mourned by partners, parents, children, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins, friends and colleagues. And with them, by the community in Hanau and people across Germany. We are all shocked by this terrorist crime, a brutal act of murderous violence. Our sadness is interwoven with bitterness and anger.

After just a few days, I stand here before you once more. As a compatriot to share your pain. And as Federal President with the clear message: Every person living in this our country has to be able to live in security and peace. It is the duty of our state to protect this right. Here, it has to do more. It has to do everything. This responsibility is borne first and foremost by our country's institutions, this responsibility is borne by the women and men at the helm. But not just them. We all bear this responsibility! We are called upon to stand together against hatred and abuse, against terrorism and violence. On that we will be judged.

After all, this crime did not just happen. There is a narrative that goes before. A narrative of marginalisation and discrimination against

people with a migration background, against Muslims, against supposed outsiders. A narrative of intellectual arson and cheap propaganda. A narrative of hatred which relentlessly engulfs its victims on so-called social media but by far not just there. It is in this atmosphere that those who incite hatred become ever more flagrant, act ever more openly, no longer hide. It is in this atmosphere that terrorists take a weapon in their hands, some even feeling murder is justified.

"This attack was an attack against us all". These are the words we usually choose after horrendous events such as that in Hanau to try to express our solidarity with you, with the victims and their families.

Over the last few days, some of you, those affected, the families of the victims, those whom it could also have been, have been vocal in refuting this. No, this was not an attack against us all. It was an attack on those with dark hair, with a foreign name, of a different religion, whose families had migrated from the south, even if that was many generations ago.

As a man with white hair and white skin whose father was from Westphalia and whose mother came to West Germany from Wrocław, I do not need to explain my belonging to our country. I do not experience people looking disparagingly at me as they walk past, hear hurtful remarks and belittling jokes. I do not experience how job interviews, flat-hunting and appointments with the authorities are like running the gauntlet.

To be honest, I do not know how it feels to be marginalised in everyday life – long before violence takes hold. How disheartening it is to spend your whole life trying to really belong. How demoralising it is to be treated like an outsider time and again – whether consciously or subconsciously.

And I can live without fearing that my wife, my daughter or my family will suffer violence only because they have a different appearance or different faith.

But the fact of the matter is that even those who, like me, cannot share this experience need to know it exists. Yes, there is racism in our country – and it didn't start just a few weeks ago. Yes, there is widespread Islamophobia. People with dark skin or wearing a headscarf experience discrimination, are the targets of attacks, insults and violence. They all have the right to expect their fellow citizens to empathise, learn, support, contradict and intervene. They all have the right to expect their state, where protective laws are broken by heinous acts, to see, investigate and sentence. They all have a right to a state that protects them.

This was an attack directed at supposed outsiders. It struck people. Very different people. Men and women. Music-lovers and

sports fans. People who lived here, laughed, cried, forged plans for the future. People who grew up here, had children, worked, studied, lazed around. Who toiled on a building site, who wrote poems. Who were Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim or Protestant – some practising, others only on paper. People who got annoyed about politics, agreed with politics, engaged in debate. Who voted at elections, got involved or maybe didn't. Who were the pride and joy of their parents and pillars of support for their families and friends.

Ferhat was an entrepreneur and liked rap music. Mercedes was an open, cheerful woman and mother of two children. Sedat owned a bar and wouldn't hurt a fly. Gökhan was a bricklayer and worked as a waiter, he was just about to get engaged. Hamza had just completed his training and started his first job. Said Nesar was a Hanau man – always there for those who needed his help. Kaloyan helped his family as much as he could and was father to his young son. Viorel was a courier, always out and about, his parent's only child. Fatih was from Regensburg and planned to set up his own business in Hanau.

They were our fellow citizens.

They were so much more than the attacker saw in them.

For some of the victims, their background may have been important, for others less so. The reality in our country has long become more diverse. Something quite special and new, something which belongs to all of us, has grown out of the tension between what was always there and what has been added over the years, out of this exchange, out of community. So let us not be duped by those who try to divide us with the simple juxtaposition of "us" and "them".

For that is the logic of terrorism. That is the logic of hatred. Forcing people into categories. Reducing them to their background, their religion or their skin colour. Robbing them of their uniqueness. A uniqueness that is the hallmark of each and every person and that Article 1 of our Basic Law protects: Human dignity shall be inviolable.

That is exactly what we mean when we say: This attack was an attack against us all. We are all affected, we are all hurting – but we also all bear a responsibility.

It is an attack on our fundamental understanding of our community. Every person has the same dignity, the same rights. There are no second-class citizens, and above all no hierarchy for being German.

It is an attack on our freedom because everyone can decide for themselves who they are. What makes them special. Who they belong to. Also how they change.

It is an attack on peace in our society. Those who consider individuals only to be part of a group are deepening the divide between

“us” and “them”. “Them”, the “others”, who are first deemed outsiders and then enemies. The door to exchange and understanding is closed if the “outsider” is cast as an enemy. Hatred and abuse poison debates and encounters. At the end, there is violence.

That is what we mean when we say: These attacks affect us all – and we all have to take a stand. The vast majority of people in Germany are against marginalisation and prejudice, against hatred and violence. But knowing you are in the majority is not enough. The silence of the many must not become fodder for the few. No, the majority have to stand up and be counted, time and again: in clubs, at get-togethers, in the football stadium.

Our basic values, our freedom, our peace – without us they are not safe. Democracy does not live and breathe because the Basic Law prescribes it. It lives, breathes and endures when we want it and are ready to engage in it – standing up to those who call it into question or even attack it. We must actively defend democracy. When I say: “We”, I mean the state. And me. And each and every one of us!

Ten people died. They left a void which will remain. Our sadness and our anger are also interwoven with determination. Our message from Hanau to the Republic has to be: We stand together. We stick together. We want to live together.

And that is why we are listening. Seeing the individual. Accepting differences. Because we are all part of this country.

Ferhat Unvar, Mercedes Kierpacz, Sedat Gürbüz, Gökhan Gültekin, Hamza Kurtović, Kaloyan Velkov, Vili-Viorel Păun, Said Nesar Hashemi and Fatih Saraçoğlu as well. They were all part of us – each in their very own way. We hold them in our memory as part of ourselves.

Thank you very much.