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**Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at a Hanukkah celebration with the descendants of the
Posner family
on 19 December 2022
at Schloss Bellevue**

What a sight to behold. What a special moment – not to mention, what a gift! The hanukkiah of the former Rabbi Posner’s family from Kiel stands here now in the window of the Langhans Hall in Schloss Bellevue. And, in a moment, you, dear Yehuda Mansbach, as the grandson of Rabbi Arthur Posner, will light the first two candles. The light of these candles will shine outside and bear witness to the miracle of Hanukkah, for all to see. I am deeply grateful and humbled, and also happy that we can celebrate this moment together here and now.

Hanukkah is, after all, called the festival of miracles. Even though I tend to be careful when using this word outside of a religious context, for me, this shared moment encapsulates several miracles at once. For who would have dreamt that, after the crime against humanity that was the Shoah, the planned extermination of Jewish existence, Jewish life would ever thrive again here in our midst? We are incredibly fortunate that this did happen.

We have been given the wonderful gift of reconciliation. We are witnessing how today, ninety years after this hanukkiah was last used in Germany, Jews are once again going about their everyday lives in this country, in kindergartens, in synagogues, in rabbinical seminaries and in Jewish community centres. Hanukkiahs have been placed, and their candles are being lit, in tens of thousands of windows in Germany these days. This is nothing less than a shining miracle.

It could have never happened without the faith, strength and confident outlook of the Jewish community. It is the same confident outlook that your grandmother, the Rebbetzin Rahel Posner, had in Kiel

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back in 1931 when she bravely continued placing the family's hanukkiah in the window and took a picture of it.

The picture taken back then bears testimony to the immediate danger and growing hatred that Jews faced. For, immediately to the left of the hanukkiah, a flag bearing a swastika can be seen through the window that stood out on the street, where it had been raised in front of the local NSDAP office, just opposite. But there was another message that your grandmother wanted to send with this picture. That was to signal resistance and hope: "Jewry must perish, commands the flag – Jewry will flourish, the light answers back," Rahel Posner noted on the back of the photograph.

Only a little while later, the family had no choice but to leave its home and flee, to escape the murderous madness of the National Socialists. Yet their hope the Posners took with them to what is today Israel – along with their hanukkiah. How right they were to place their confidence in the light!

Today, the hanukkiah and the world-famous photograph are exhibited at the Yad Vashem Memorial. The hanukkiah already returned to Germany early this year, thanks to the wonderful idea of the Society of Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany – as a sticker for the "Shine a Light" initiative. On Holocaust Remembrance Day, it had been placed in tens of thousands of windows. Including here at Schloss Bellevue.

Everywhere, this light sent a strong signal of society's opposition to hatred. Unfortunately, we are sorely in need of such signals. For here, too, we are witnessing how antisemitism is on the rise and daring to enter the public square. Antisemitic conspiracy theories are spreading, sometimes right to the heart of our society, and Jewish women and men are being attacked.

That is why we all, each and every one of us, must time and again stand up to all forms of antisemitism. No one must look the other way! Also, our state and our authorities must be on their guard – and tirelessly prosecute any offences.

We must be just as consistent in our remembrance of the Shoah, too. We need strong, clear forms of commemoration, so that we can understand and make understood what happened back then. I am very happy that the Society of Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany is constantly seeking out new and tangible ways to make sure we will never forget.

I am in awe of Rahel Posner's inner light, which was her response to the hatred. May she be a role model for us all. I am eternally grateful to you, her family, that you were so generous and friendly as to let us share in your history and the brave thoughts your grandparents had.

It is an honour to our country that, as descendants of Holocaust survivors, you have made the effort and embarked on the painful

journey to come to Germany for the first time following the Shoah. We cannot thank you enough for the openness and tremendous gesture this represents. I am incredibly pleased that you have brought your hanukkiyah here, and that you have invited me to celebrate the festival of miracles together with you.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.