

MESSAGE OF GREETING

on the occasion of
the inauguration of part 9/B of the "Path of Remembrance"

Dear Ms. Secretary General!

Dear and honoured guests from home and abroad!

First of all, I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you for coming together today to inaugurate the new Stations within the project "Stones of Remembrance".

In its nine years of existence, the Association has succeeded in making visible many individual fates of Jewish history in the time of National Socialism. The small brass plaques are to be found in as many as 15 Viennese districts, at 320 different places. They remind us of the 1,250 persons who had dwelt and lived here before falling victim to the merciless extermination machinery of the National Socialists. In these nine years, the names of the former inhabitants were certainly not only anchored in the ground of the city in the most literal sense of the word. But what could happen in our midst at that time was also anchored in the heads of people. Therefore, the Stones of Remembrance symbolize a joint reappraisal of the recent history of our country, and are a visible sign that the time of denial and silence is over.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

You came here today to commemorate those who had lived here in Leopoldstadt and, when Hitler's Germany seized power, were deprived of their right and dignity overnight, and finally of their life in a horrible way.

It is the great merit of the Association "Stones of Remembrance" to have established a "Path of Remembrance" devoted to the inhabitants of various Viennese districts. This contribution to the reconstruction of Jewish life before the time of terror and ruthlessness cannot be overstated.

I consider it a positive sign that so many people, both in this country and abroad, are committed to and have been involving themselves in this form of commemoration, all with great sympathy. It is of particular importance that the Stones of Remembrance bring home to the youth a piece of Austrian history, which is their history too, and facilitate a dialogue between generations.

Reappraising our recent past remains an important element of political culture in Austria – and I say so with deep conviction and great emphasis.

I am grateful to the Association "Stones of Remembrance", to Ms. Secretary General Elisabeth Ben David-Hindler and to everyone having joined her for this deeply touching form of commemoration. I am certain that forces of reconciliation and peace for the future will grow from it as well. I wish to express my thanks to everyone attending today and to everyone having contributed to this event.

You have participated in a work of commemoration which cannot undo any of the past, but which can give back some dignity to the people struck.

I wish you a felicitous and contemplative commemoration event and greet you very warmly.

Dr. Heinz Fischer
Austrian Federal President

Vienna, October 2014