

Dear family members, dear Daliah Hindler, dear representatives of the Association "Stones of Remembrance",

I would like to welcome you all to the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> part of the "Street of Remembrance" here in Leopoldstadt, the second district of Vienna.

Dear family members, I am touched you have taken such a long journey and expended such a great deal of effort to commemorate your parents, grandparents, sibling and relatives, who have been deported and murdered by the Nazi regime.

Last Sunday I have been to Mauthausen at the international liberation ceremony, which had the motto "Never number – forever human". Numbering people objectifies and dehumanizes them. If we hear of 6 million Jews being murdered by the Nazis, this terrible number seems incomprehensible, alien, far away in the past to us. I think it lies beyond imagination, what deportation, torture, humiliation meant to all these people. But if we can hold on to a name, we comprehend, that they were our neighbours, ancestors, relatives and friends. The project "Stones of remembrance" strives for giving them back their names and their presence in the streets, where they were torn out of their homes. We walk through the streets and alleys of Leopoldstadt, and suddenly a golden glint from the past touches our mind – a stone of remembrance.

Before the Shoah, Leopoldstadt was the centre of Jewish culture and life in Vienna. Two thirds of the approximately 48.000 Jews who got deported from Vienna were residents of our district.

The commemoration year 2018 has made the Jewish past of this district more visible. The frontage of the Jewish temple was symbolically rebuilt with four white columns. At all of the 25 destroyed Viennese

synagogues, thereof 6 in Leopoldstadt, were added light steles, memorials, shining in the night. In our district office we host the exhibition "Last places before deportation", documenting the system of mass deportation in our district. The Austrian Academy of Sciences offers guided tours there every month.

At the commemoration event Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen said: "We bear responsibility for the people, who were expelled from here. The wrong cannot be undone. But the public recognition of their suffering has to be a matter of importance for us."

Leopoldstadt is a colourful and culturally diverse district today. Fortunately it is again the district with the largest Jewish population and Jewish life returned to our streets.

Let us be mindful and brave, to stand up to injustice and forgetfulness, and to defend those who are persecuted for their religion, ethnicity or political convictions. History does not recur exactly the same way, but evil spirits of the past reappear in new costumes. No one shall ever again have to flee from here!

At last I want to thank the representatives of the Association "Stones of Remembrance" for their tireless efforts and I want to thank you for coming today!