

Warsaw, 3 November 2025

Participants of the annual delegation
of the European Jewish Association
to commemorate the victims of the Kristallnacht

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome the initiative to commemorate the cruel, unimaginable crimes committed by the Germans on the territory of the Third Reich and then in the countries they occupied. It is extremely difficult to preserve the memory of the genocidal crime of the Holocaust committed by the Nazis. After all, when we learn about the history of the victims, images of their suffering inevitably come to mind – images so terrible that we would like to look away. By proclaiming the truth about the martyrdom of the persecuted Jews and protecting this truth from attempts to distort it, especially from relativizing the guilt of the German perpetrators, we become contemporary witnesses to the hell of the Holocaust.

The truth requires courage. This universal wisdom takes on special meaning when spoken here in Krakow, which the German occupiers made the capital of the General Government, and in Oświęcim, where they built the world's largest death factory – Auschwitz-Birkenau. Standing in these places, we do not need words. They are replaced by objects, buildings, streets, and documents on which the perpetrators left the mark of their hatred, racism, and inhuman brutality. For if, as I have written, preserving the memory of the Holocaust is extremely difficult, visiting the places where the demonic plan to exterminate the Jewish people was carried out can be a truly traumatic experience. Therefore, I would like to thank all those who, wanting to learn the truth about the Shoah, find the courage to see the traces of the extermination carried out here by the Germans.

Thank you for visiting Poland – our Homeland, where 87 years ago news from Germany about the tragic and terrifying events of Kristallnacht echoed broadly. In November 1938, we Poles watched with concern as a wave of German anti-Semitism rose. Images of brown-shirted militias in the streets, smashing shop windows, setting fire to houses and synagogues were seen here as harbingers of impending terror and aggression, including against our country and our people. Thousands of German citizens of Jewish origin sought refuge from persecution in Poland. Some of them found refuge, but only briefly – because already in September 1939, the Nazis invaded our Homeland. Here, the German occupiers carried out the methodical industrial extermination of Jews: from imprisonment in ghettos, to their destruction by slave labor, starvation, and disease, to mass executions and transports to death camps.

Today, it is our special duty as Poles to guard the truth and evidence of German crimes and to care for the places sanctified by the blood of the Holocaust victims. German camps, gas chambers, crematoria, walls with traces of shootings – all these are unhealed wounds of memory. Your visit

is an opportunity to read once again these testimonies of the Holocaust, which began and was heralded by Kristallnacht on the streets of German and Austrian cities. I wish the participants of this annual delegation courage in confronting the memory of the fate of the Jews and tenacity in seeking the truth, especially in ensuring that the tragedy of 87 years ago is properly commemorated – there where it happened.

Best regards

President of the Republic of Poland

Karol Nawrocki