

**Video Speech by Minister of State Monika Grütters, Member of the German Bundestag,
Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media,
at the virtual memorial event
on the occasion of the liberation of the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück
at the Ravensbrück memorial site on 19 April 2020 (recorded on 16 April)**

I welcome all viewers,
but most importantly: I welcome the survivors and relatives.

Remembering together creates closeness and solidarity.
Because of this, I would have liked to personally welcome those of you who – burdened with past suffering – had planned to return to the place of your ordeal, here at the Ravensbrück memorial site. It means a lot to me to let you know:
We who live in Germany today will not abandon you to your memories – not even in these times where distance is our highest civic duty. We don't want to and will not forget what Germans did to you.

The corona pandemic requires physical distance. But our thoughts are with you: all of us who, from different places in Germany and Israel, Europe and the world, commemorate the immeasurable suffering which was revealed for the world to witness when the concentration camps were liberated.

In the Ravensbrück concentration camp alone, almost 28,000 women, men and children had lost their lives by that day – through murder or severe physical mistreatment. In total, 120,000 people from more than 30 countries were imprisoned here and suffered inconceivable physical and mental cruelty.

The barbaric atrocities committed by Germans in the concentration camps go far beyond the thinkable and imaginable. But even here – amidst hellish inhumanity – humanity had its victories.

Many such examples are known also from Ravensbrück.

The statue “Die Tragende” – which you see behind me / next to me – is a reminder of that.

“Die Tragende” or “Woman Carrying” has a name: Olga Benario. She helped other women in the Ravensbrück camp although it was forbidden. She “carried” those who suffered even more than her. She was beaten when she carried an exhausted woman to the sickbay. It is said that, because of this, she was put in solitary confinement for several weeks.

Olga Benario did not survive the concentration camp. But what survived are her words: “Above all,” Olga Benario wrote, “above all, I have learned to recognize the true value of everything human.”

Today, we also gratefully remember women and men like Olga Benario: Her insistence on seeing the other as a person with value and dignity, suffering hardship and need – even under inhumane conditions – that is her legacy.

Preserving and upholding this legacy together with the memory of the suffering of those who were murdered and maltreated is part of our responsibility: not only on commemoration days and at memorials, but also and especially in dealing with discrimination and exclusion in our contemporary society.

Let us not stay silent when new political forces treat this legacy with contempt!
Let us not allow hatred, resentment and indifference to call into question “the true value of everything human”!

Let us do our utmost to prevent the seeds of inhumane ideologies from finding fertile soil.

Not least in this light, keeping the memory of the inhuman savagery in the concentration camps alive remains a perpetual task. Today, we cannot physically stand together for this.

But by making space for remembrance in our thoughts and in our hearts, we make a common stand nevertheless.

I thank you for that – no matter where you are currently commemorating the liberation of the concentration camps with me.