

Speech by President of the Riigikogu Jüri Ratas at the flag hoisting ceremony at Tall Hermann tower on 24 February 2022

People of Estonia,

Today, on the morning of the Independence Day of the Republic of Estonia, when we decorate our homes with our blue, black and white flags, even before that, in the early hours of the morning, Russia started a full-scale military attack against Ukraine.

Early this morning, the Government of the Republic of Estonia decided to start consultations with our NATO allies on the basis of Article 4. I condemn the totally unjustified aggression against free and peaceful Ukraine. War will bring along much suffering and human victims. It will have an impact on global security. Today, we all are with the country and people of Ukraine in our thoughts and prayers.

Slava Ukraini! Long live Estonia!

Today, as we stand together here on Toompea to celebrate the birthday of the Republic of Estonia, or in our homes surrounded by our friends and families, we feel a deep connection to each other. I hope that this feeling does not come over us only at important moments but that we feel connected to each other every day.

It is 104 years today from the establishment of the Republic of Estonia. We are blessed to be living in a safe country that is founded on freedom, justice, and law. We feel the value of this particularly keenly in the turbulence of the current international security environment.

Today, here on the slope of Toompea, in our homes, and across Estonia, our hearts are with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Our response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine is a resounding NO. This is a savage attack against the

foundations of European security and our shared democratic values, but it is not a destructive blow. Quite the contrary, the unity of the European Union and NATO, their cooperation and support to Ukraine are stronger than ever before.

Friends,

The raising of our tricolour on this special day means a lot to Estonia and every one of us. Our national flag is a symbol of freedom, peace, and independence.

On 27 June this year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the blue, black and white flag receiving the national flag status from the Riigikogu of the Republic of Estonia. Although our national flag was banned some time later for the long occupation period, these colours nevertheless remained sheltered deep within our hearts and became even more precious and dear to us. We never gave up the dream of freedom... We swore vows on these colours – to fight and withstand. This makes it all the more special today, on the 104th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia, to raise the blue, black and white flag here, on the Tall Hermann tower.

Unity and solidarity are just as important today as during the first years of our Republic. The threat of war in Europe, the long-winded health care crisis and economic worries make us work even harder, care for each other, and seek cooperation.

We must build our Estonia in a way that makes every Estonian heart swell with patriotism. The full support of the state must also reach every Estonian resident and every Estonian family. This is the only way to keep our beloved Estonia standing on a solid foundation.

Compatriots, ladies and gentlemen,

I wish us all a lovely and well-spent anniversary of the Republic of Estonia. Let us all enjoy the beautiful winter weather with our friends and families, admire

the flying blue, black and white flags, and step together on the path towards the 105th anniversary of Estonia.

Let us take care of one another.

Long live Estonia!