

**Message from Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
for the memorial ceremony for the children of Bullenhusser Damm  
on 20 April 2022**

Dear relatives,

dear members, friends and guests of the Children of Bullenhusser Damm Association,

Mania, Lelka, Sergio, Surcis, Riwka, Eduard, Alexander, Marek, Walter, Lea, Georges-André, Bluma, Jacqueline, Eduard, Marek, Roman, Eleonora, Roman, Ruchla – and the Polish girl of whom we only know that her first name began with H – all of them, twenty boys and girls from Poland, France, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Italy, were cruelly murdered in the last days of the Second World War by members of the SS, here in this house, in the heart of Hamburg.

Among the countless crimes committed by Germans during the National Socialist regime, the murders in the cellar of the school in Bullenhusser Damm were an especially abhorrent, shocking and inconceivable deed.

The lives of these boys and girls were taken here. Their childhood had long since been taken from them.

Germans had ripped the children and their families out of their lives, forced them into ghettos and deported them to Auschwitz. There they were torn away from their parents. The children got out of Auschwitz, the hell that promised only death.

However, they were taken to Neuengamme concentration camp, not far from Hamburg, where a heinous doctor used them for pseudo-medical experiments.

Anton Hölzel and Dirk Deutekom, Gabriel Florence and René Quenouille, who themselves were interned as resistance fighters in Neuengamme and had looked after the children, were killed alongside them 77 years ago.

Moreover, 24 Soviet prisoners of war, whose names we do not even know to this very day, were also murdered.

The perpetrators wanted to extinguish the memory of all of them.

But they did not succeed.

That we can remember the dead today, that we know the names and faces of many of them, is thanks to the many years of laborious research and investigation by Günther Schwarberg, Barbara Hüsing and the Children of Bullenhuser Damm Association.

And it is thanks in particular to you, dear relatives: many of you experienced atrocities first-hand during the German occupation and the war. Many of you were forced to suffer sheer unimaginable horrors during the Shoah. And yet you have taken it upon yourselves to come to Germany, some of you from afar, to talk about and remember the lives of these children and your relatives here, in this place, on this anniversary. I am profoundly grateful for that.

We are united in our mourning for those killed. Yet it also places us Germans under an obligation. It obliges us not to forget what happened, not to forget the crimes in which so many were complicit. For too long, this guilt was concealed, suppressed and forgotten. The fact that only a few perpetrators were brought to justice is a troubling

chapter in Germany's legal history.

Today we no longer want to conceal, suppress or forget, and we will not. Remembering those killed, the murdered children of Bullenhuser Damm is also a stance against inhumanity. Remembering the victims, keeping their memory alive, is part of our historical responsibility. We Germans are and will remain conscious of this responsibility – today and in the future!

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier*