

# Joint statement by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová ahead of the Europe-Wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes

*“Each year on this day, we pay tribute to the victims of all totalitarian regimes and recall with sorrow the terrible consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, signed on 23 August 1939 by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The Pact plunged Europe even deeper into one of its darkest periods. Millions of people were murdered and generations of fellow Europeans scarred.*

*It is our duty to preserve the names of the millions persecuted, and keep their memories alive. Especially because today, 79 years later, our common values of human dignity, fundamental rights, rule of law and democracy are challenged again by extremist, nationalist and divisive rhetoric.*

*By guarding and passing on the memory of past atrocities to the next generation of Europeans, we help to inoculate ourselves against repeating them, and we recall the importance of defending the human rights of every European.*

*We must continue to tell the story of what happened in Europe’s past, so that we do not make the same mistakes in the future.”*

## **Background**

The signature of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on 23 August 1939 led to the deportation, torture and murder of tens of millions of people under totalitarian regimes.

While the end of World War II marked the defeat of the Nazi regime, many Europeans continued for decades to suffer under totalitarian regimes.

## **For More Information**

Video: [First Vice-President Frans Timmermans on our common values](#)