



De Minister van Justitie

**TOESPRAAK**  
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**European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism**

## Turn to love

*Voorbereiding: Bernard*

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Europe has never been free of terrorism. Madrid, London and last year Belgium, France and Germany are but recent attacks which are all marked in our collective memories.

Often random people were targeted, sometimes Jews were a specific target such as in Brussels, Copenhagen and Toulouse, but always ordinary people paid the ultimate price.

One of the reason these events mark our collective memories so strongly is that they touch one of the most pure and essential human rights. The right for innocents to live and love in safety, without fear.



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Daesh ideology explicitly denies this human right and continues to identify ordinary citizens as 'desirable and legitimate' targets. They have given themselves the right to disrupt and destroy innocent lives from Brussels to Baghdad.

In 1948 in Paris a most beautiful and treasured text was adopted. It states that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

That's right: Freedom from fear as one of the highest aspirations of the common people.

We, governments and citizens alike must not bow for fear. It may never determine us or our actions.



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I was not there when guns were blazing and bombs went off. I was not there when explosions resonated through concert halls and departure gates. I haven't seen the desperation or tasted the terror. I have not sensed the panic and have not smelled the fear.

But I have seen and heard these things in the eyes and voices of victims of heinous acts of terrorism.

The least we can do for victims is listen, support and help them

The Belgian Government and Parliament have taken immediate action after the attacks. A single point of contact was set up within the commission for financial aid to victims of deliberate acts of violence; a unique address and telephone number were communicated so that the victims could immediately seek assistance and social assistants were standby. Numerous legislation was drafted and voted to allow the state to compensate the victims in a proper way.



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A simple access to the intervention of the victim fund for Belgian and foreign victims of terrorism was thus legally created as well as an entitlement of a possible recovery pension and reimbursement of medical Cares.

However we are aware that we can never alleviate the suffering. Beloved mothers, fathers, sons & daughters are simply irreplaceable. There is no consolation for those who will be confronted with the consequences of these gruesome acts of violence. We can only hope to be there for them and stand by their side.

A state should always hold the exclusive right to use, threaten, or authorize physical force against residents of its territory. If not that state has failed its citizens.

But security measures alone are not enough and the illusion of total security leads ultimately to total totalitarianism.



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Evidently we must deal with those who promote hatred, intolerance and violence, but we must always aspire to be free from fear.

Some of the victims I've had the privilege to meet are inspiring living examples of that freedom from fear. That courage to stand up and promote the power of love and tolerance. Mohamed El Bachiri is such a person. After tragically losing his wife, in the attacks that took place in this city last year, Mohamed appeals to us all to embrace our humanity and diversity, bounded as we are by love. His testimony and his message of love - of Jihad d'amour - has been listened to and viewed by over 10 million people across the globe. It has resonated as far as Indonesia and Canada, Bombay and Brazil - and some of the most powerful reactions and words of encouragement have come from places such as Kabul and Bagdad where peace is but a distant memory. I can only encourage you to watch his message of hope.

His message has also inspired a global campaign for love and unity called #Turn To Love. Turn to love calls upon everyone to show turn



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their back in disrespect to Daesh' ideology, and turn towards love for humanity, and the undeniable human rights for all.

As part of this campaign and in respect for the victims a commemoration will be on March 22 in Brussels in remembrance of the attacks on our city. I sincerely hope this call will be answered and its symbol will be copied all over the world and I am very happy and honoured to launch this call today. Just as Mohamed, Brussels will find strength in its suffering and use that strength to be at the centre of this global campaign of love.

Freedom from fear, turning one's back to hate and terrorism, and turning to love is the only way forward. In the words of Mohamed, "Rather than dwelling on the madness and hatred of some, let us turn towards the genius and the goodness of humanity".

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