

Next week, we will mark one year since the terrible murders that were committed in Hanau. On 19 February 2020, a man shot dead nine people in that city; afterwards, he killed his mother and then himself. It was a crime motivated by hate, an act of racist hatred. The names of the victims are: Ferhat Unvar, Mercedes Kierpacz, Sedat Gürbüz, Gökhan Gültekin, Hamza Kurtović, Kaloyan Velkov, Vili Viorel Păun, Said Nesar Hashemi and Fatih Saraçoğlu. The murderer did not know them; he hated them solely based on their appearance, their families' origins – because they were immigrants, or the children of immigrants.

I will never forget the memorial ceremony in Hanau; how I spoke with the families of the victims, or their desperation at having to live on without the person they loved.

Shock was felt about this attack and sympathy was extended to the families from far beyond the city of Hanau. By again commemorating the victims of Hanau now, one year on, we are sending a signal: All of us who want to live together peacefully here in Germany stand united against racist hatred.

Violent acts such as the murders of Hanau, the attack in Halle or the murder of Walter Lübcke demonstrated in a horrific way what right-wing extremism can do. We must do everything we can to uproot this disastrous ideology. One thing that is contributing to this effort is the Cabinet Committee for the fight against racism and right-wing extremism that has been established by the Federal Government. A large number of concrete measures are under way: we are improving governmental structures for countering racism and right-wing extremism; this includes reconfiguring, and enhancing the capabilities of, Federal Government security authorities for this fight. We want increased support for those fellow citizens who become victims of racist discrimination. We are ramping up programmes to strengthen and promote democratic civil society.

The attacks in Hanau disrupted peaceful coexistence in our society and social cohesion in Germany – regardless of people's origins or religious beliefs. I said this one year ago, and I repeat it with full conviction today: Racism is a poison. Hatred is a poison. We most strongly and determinedly take a stand against all those who attempt to cause division in Germany.