

Information concerning 16 March

Published: 10.03.2023.



During and after World War II, Latvia came under the occupation of two totalitarian regimes – those of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Through repression and terror, the totalitarian Nazi and Soviet powers forcibly drafted many people in the occupied Latvia to join the armed forces of one or the other state.

The State of Latvia has been consistent in condemning the crimes against humanity committed by both totalitarian regimes, Latvia denounces the Holocaust and mourns its victims. The glorification of totalitarian regimes and denial of crimes committed by them are prohibited by law in Latvia.

The people of Latvia, who during World War II were subject to horrors of war on one or the other side of the battlefield, commemorate their fallen on different dates. The battles between the Soviet and Nazi troops in March 1944 caused major fatalities among Latvian men unlawfully drafted into the Nazi German army.

Since the restoration of independence, the Latvian government has consistently pursued an approach that Latvia commemorates its fallen soldiers on 11 November (the Lāčplēšis Day) – the day we remember our heroes.

As a democratic country, Latvia respects and also guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. 16 March is not an official remembrance day, and people, on their own private initiative, pay their respects to the fallen soldiers. The senior officials and members of the government do not participate in those commemorative gatherings in the centre of Latvia's capital city.

It is essential to differentiate between those who committed crimes and those who died in combat at the battlefield. Rather than creating new front lines, it is important to be jointly aware of the tragic lessons of history in order to prevent politicization, radicalism and the spread of extremist ideas.

<https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/article/information-concerning-16-march>