

**Message on the occasion
of the International Weeks against Racism
15-28 March 2021**

Dear readers,

Simply by taking the time – despite all the concerns about coronavirus – to reflect on the topic presented here, you are already doing a service to the International Weeks against Racism, namely: giving it your attention.

Sadly, this attention is sorely needed, because hatred cannot be contained by a lockdown, as evidenced by a torrent of comments in online fora. We must take issue with this. We need to push back, with the means of our government of laws and a determined civil society. I know that many committed individuals regretted not being able to get involved in the most important way – through face-to-face encounters. So I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of the professionals and volunteers who have persevered, by putting their creativity to work and developing new digital formats that let them carry on with at least some of their important tasks.

Granted, other topics often take centre stage in public debate – yet this work remains necessary. In Germany, too, racism is a problem. It threatens both our right to coexist in freedom and the peaceful diversity of cultures, religions and convictions in our democracy. Since the attacks of Halle and Hanau, this does resonate with people – but that does not mean a solution is right around the corner. On the contrary, it is all too easy to make a blanket statement about “how bad this hate is”. But how much courage does it take for us, when there’s an incident in our daily lives, to get involved and say: “stop – that’s wrong!” It may be that an application for a flat, a training position or a job is laid aside because the applicant’s name seems odd and foreign. Or there may be young people in the school courtyard who, convinced that their background or origin is superior, shout “you’re such a loser” at others. Or people who, although they live in our country, do not feel at home here and no longer expect anything other than rejection. Both resignation and hatred must not be allowed to spread – and that is what makes the International Weeks against Racism so valuable. They remind us once a year of what we must fight for each and every day.

All of us, together.

