



**Dr. Gabriele Andretta**  
**Präsidentin des Niedersächsischen Landtages**

**„Cultural identity and open mindedness“**

**Grußwort**

**anlässlich des Empfangs der Nahum-Goldmann-Fellows  
am Donnerstag, 9. August 2018, 17.00 Uhr,  
im Forum des Niedersächsischen Landtages**

***Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!***

Dear Mrs Marlene Bethlehem,  
dear rabbi Jeni Friedman,  
dear Dr. Solomon Rytz, dear Mrs Rytz,  
dear Dr. Josef Schuster,  
dear Mr. Michael Fürst,  
dear Nahum-Goldmann-Fellows,  
honoured rabbis,  
dear alumni, lecturers, mentors and guests,

I have the pleasure to welcome you today on behalf of the Parliament of Lower Saxony. It is an honour as well as a matter close to my heart.

This year's International Nahum-Goldmann-Fellowship is the first in the 30-year-old history of the fellowship program to be held in Germany - a gesture of high symbolic value for which I owe you, Mrs Bethlehem, Dr. Schuster, Mr. Fürst and Mrs. Friedman, my wholehearted thanks.

In 2018, Germany remarks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pogrom Night, one of the shameful chain links in the unleashing of the most abhorrent crimes committed during the Nazi Regime.

And it is in 2018, that we experience anew, how easily and quickly people may become radicalised. All over the world, we observe aggravating tendencies to meet the challenges of migration and globalization with nationalism, xenophobia, and even hatred. And we are

forced to witness that parts of our societies elude the values of democracy, free press and rational discourse while immuring themselves in resentment and segregation.

The German society is split over the question of how to provide for refugees and displaced persons:

On the one hand, communities, administrative bodies and hundreds of thousands of volunteers have achieved and are constantly achieving great things. Their efforts are nothing if not a declared believe in a country that - after its deep plunge - is committed to humanity and solidarity.

On the other hand, hostilities and verbal assaults against minorities grow both in number and in virulence. The aggressions are often enough masked by the asserted need to protect our alleged core culture against estrangement - a claim that is not only voiced in the streets but lately also heard in parliaments.

The development is alarming. Opposing it decisively, yet without hysteria and condescendence, is the pressing duty of all persons in political authority. In a democracy, however, the latter not only includes the elected but also the electors.

Ladys and gentlemen,

I am convinced that the Nahum-Goldmann-Fellowship and its objective of engaging memory, culture, and identity to foster civil courage and philanthropy are in many ways exemplary for worthy efforts in present times: Self-awareness and cultural identity do not lead to alienation but lay the foundations for open mindedness as can be seen by the shining examples of Nahum Goldmann und Marlene Bethlehem. Their commitment against ostracism and injustice is an apt model for lived solidarity and a great compass for you, the young generation growing into leadership.

Life in a free, democratic society is both, gift and Herculean labour. It requires us to assume self-definition and autonomy, to carry responsibility for ourselves as well as for others and to exercise benevolence, even if indifference and retreat might sometimes tempt us as the more convenient paths.

Let me thank you for the dedication with which you embrace the task and assure you that my warmest wishes are accompanying you. All the best and thanks for your attention.