Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Check against delivery

Memorial ceremony for the victims of the fire in Crans-Montana which occurred on 1 January 2026

Martigny, Friday, 9 January 2026

Ecumenical lecture
Olivia Seigne

You, the quiet presence that connects us.
We are here.
Broken.
Because life has come to a sudden end.
Because something that should never have come to pass, has.
And because questions still remain.

Why?
So we pause.
Amidst a heavy silence.
We pause.
For what is missing.
For what can no longer be said,
experienced,
shared.

Why?
Our thoughts go out to the injured.
Those who are suffering and in pain,
fighting for their lives,
and need time
to regain confidence –
in their bodies,
the next step,
the coming days ahead.

We think of all the people
watching over them, hoping, anxious at their side.

And we thank everyone giving care, healing and comfort.

We remember the names.
The faces.
The lives.
What has been,
What remains within us.
What is missing,
What hurts.
And the questions remain:
Why?
Why you?
Why her?
Why him, in particular?
We stand here,
not to explain
what cannot be understood,
but to be present.
To be together.
With each other.
Side by side.
With each other.
To share our grief,
without answers.
To remember,
without words.
To be united in this.
Beyond our differences,
in faith and in doubt.

May compassion
be a silent force
that carries us forward.
May love be present,
even where we no longer believe or hope.

In hardship.
In support.
In sharing
our burdens.

This moment brings us together.
This moment holds us.
You too, hold us
in your presence.
Amen

Text: Rita Famos, President of the Protestant Church in Switzerland, 7 January 2026

Address by
Mathias Reynard, President of Valais Cantonal Council
Head of the Department of Health, Social Affairs and Culture

Dear families,
Dear loved ones,
Ladies and gentlemen in your respective titles and positions,

1 January 2026. A day we will never forget.

At the dawn of the new year, a moment of celebration turned into a nightmare.

At the dawn of the new year, young people who had just shared their wishes, their dreams and their laughter were struck by violence and death.

In Crans-Montana, the lives of 156 people were shattered in the early hours of the new year.

40 people lost their lives, 116 were injured, some very seriously. Countless families and loved ones have also been affected by this tragedy.

We are gathered here today to honour the memory of those 40 people, to say that we will never forget. We are also here for the injured, for those who are still fighting for their lives at this very moment. It is heartbreaking that they cannot be at our side today.

Words can never repair the irreparable.

Nor can they fill the void left by those we have lost.

But silence alone cannot suffice.

So we speak.

To express our grief.

To express our solidarity.

To express our commitment.

I would like to begin by addressing the families and loved ones. I do so on behalf of the Valais Government, but first and foremost as a human being.

I want to tell you this:

We are with you. With you, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, families, friends, lovers, classmates…

Since that night on 1 January, not a moment has passed in which we have not thought of you.
Our thoughts, our prayers and our hearts are with you, the grieving families, the injured and their loved ones, who live in anguish and uncertainty.

In the face of this unbearable powerlessness, feel the countless signs of support and kindness coming from all Switzerland and far beyond.

This instinctive, spontaneous solidarity was expressed from the very first minutes of the tragedy.

Anonymous citizens, loved ones and passers-by reached out their hands, opened their doors and provided assistance.

In the midst of chaos, human generosity and the strength of the heart refused to yield.
This, too, we will never forget.

This ceremony also gives us the chance to pay a full tribute and express our deepest gratitude to all of the emergency services, of whom we are so proud.

To the first responders.

To the firefighters.

To the paramedics.

To the police officers.

To the emergency psychologists.

To all the hospital staff who cared for, supported and saved the lives of dozens of young people. Your professionalism, courage and dignity are an inspiration to us all.

You rose to the challenge of this emergency and demonstrated the humanity that the situation required.

On behalf of the Valais government and the public, I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all the teams involved, both here in Valais and elsewhere.

Thank you to all the hospitals in Switzerland and abroad that answered the call.

Thank you to all the countries who reached out and offered up their hospitals.

We are honoured by the presence today of heads of state and representatives of our fellow nations.

We particularly appreciate the support of President Emmanuel Macron of France and President Sergio Mattarella of Italy, whose nations have been severely affected. Your presence here is a testament to our shared destiny, to a Europe that knows how to come together when what matters most is at stake: human life, dignity and compassion.

Wir danken unseren Eidgenossen, die unserem Motto gerecht geworden sind: Einer für alle, alle für einen.

Il Vallese ringrazia di cuore tutti i Paesi che io hanno sostenuti. Il nostro pensiero va a tutte le vittime e alle loro famiglie, di ogni nazionalità. In questo dolore condiviso, siamo uniti come non mai.

The Canton of Valais expresses its deepest gratitude to all the countries that have stood by our side. Our thoughts are with all the victims and their families, of every nationality. In this shared grief, we stand united.

This tragedy unites us in mourning, but also in responsibility.

There must be complete clarity about the circumstances surrounding the tragedy and where responsibility lies, including among the political authorities. Justice must be done, with rigour and independence.

Establishing the truth is a duty we owe to the victims, to their families, and to society as a whole. Every victim is like a child of Valais.

The investigation will determine where responsibility lies. But beyond this procedure, we all have a moral responsibility in the face of this tragedy. Teenagers and young people lost their lives. They are blameless in all of this. As adults, as political leaders, the very least that we can do is to apologise on behalf of the entire community. It is also our way of showing respect.

Finally, I would like to deliver this message to all the teenagers and young people gathered here and elsewhere:

Your suffering and your fears are justified. You have the right to cry. But you will also have the right to smile and to laugh again.

Your pain is immeasurable, but so is your capacity to live, to love and to create.

Albert Camus wrote that in the midst of winter, he found within himself an invincible summer.

This thought reminds us that even when everything seems frozen by cold, the night, or pain, life continues to whisper within us.

It reminds us that, even in the midst of hardship, there is a silent strength that resists, that holds fast, and that guides us along the path of resilience.

As Camus went on to say:

"No matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better, pushing right back."

May that inner strength be nurtured by our collective memory. May it guide us in our responsibility as adults. And may it enable those who remain to continue moving forward, without ever forgetting.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear families,

With respect, in remembrance and in solidarity,

Together and as one, we will find our feet again.

Together and as one, we will move forward towards an invincible summer.

Address by
President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin
Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER)

Dear families and loved ones of the victims,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I speak to you with the restraint and care the current circumstances demand, marked as they are by profound sadness and deep grief. The start of 2026 should have brought the familiar hopes and promises – a new year with a fresh start. For young people especially, such promises take flight on dreams and the rightful hopes of youth – promises destined for the skies that fell too soon into the ashes of a night of horror.

At the turn of the fifth century, Saint Augustine developed in his Confessions the idea that there are three dimensions of present time: the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things to come. I call upon his thoughts today, as we stand at the meeting point of yesterday and tomorrow, between memory and hope.

In the wake of this terrible tragedy – one that has, I can say with certainty, united Switzerland in grief – allow me to speak on behalf of our country and say this: we have at this moment the brief privilege of gathering together to share the weight of this burden. Our gathering cannot take away this burden, but if it brings comfort – however small – in our shared grief, that is enough to give it meaning.

The memory of that horrendous night brings to mind the faces of all 156 victims – those who lost their lives and those who were injured – their happy days, their carefree lives.

Our country is devastated by this tragedy. We honour the memory of those who were lost, and we stand beside those now facing a long journey of recovery.

Many of them were on holiday here – young women and men from Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Finland, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

And it was here, with us, that their lives were torn apart, while they were out celebrating the new year with friends, unsuspecting and full of joy.

Our country is listening and will continue to listen to all the families, from Switzerland and beyond, whose lives this catastrophe has changed both brutally and irreversibly. We also wish to express our profound gratitude for the countless messages of support and offers of medical assistance we have received.

Many of the injured, including several Swiss nationals, remain in intensive care in France, Belgium, Germany and Italy.

We are moved by the solidarity shown both nationally and internationally, and are aware of the great debt we owe. We know we do not face this tragedy alone.

Finally, our country thanks wholeheartedly all those who have worked, in whatever capacity, to save lives, to identify those who were lost, to establish the truth – because truth is essential to the bond of trust between our institutions and the society they serve.

In time, hope will be restored, though its shape remains uncertain – for some, defined by the unbearable void of loss; for others, by a long and difficult road to recovery. Hope offers the resilience needed to face our grief, providing a sure remedy, but one which comes in its own time. Hope also depends on our justice system's ability to bring failures to light and to impose consequences without delay or leniency. This is a moral responsibility as well as a duty of the state.

If time and its implications stand at the heart of our prayers today, it is because time is shaped by our consciousness. There would be no time, Saint Augustine tells us, if we had no soul capable of remembering or anticipating. Time lives in our hearts – in our memories of those we mourn and in our hopes for healing.

This ninth of January 2026 is thus a day of remembrance, which we owe to those who died and were injured on New Year's Day. A day of remembrance, and above all of love and support for the victims' parents, their brothers and sisters, their loved ones and friends, for an entire community that has borne its share of the national tragedy of Crans-Montana.

It is also a day to look ahead, and to call upon the authorities and lawmakers to learn every lesson possible from this tragedy and ensure the highest achievable standards of safety in public establishments.

As the shock endures, three words emerge from the flames of this tragedy: unthinkable, unspeakable, unforgettable.

Unthinkable, because a country known for its rigour and reliability must be especially vigilant against risk – that ever-present shadow, always lurking, always seeking the breach.

Unspeakable, because no superlatives could suffice to describe or quantify the grief we feel, and with it the loss, the pain, and the suffering. Yet we have tried. And we are right to do so, because silence, however healing it may be, is not alone in bringing solace.

Unforgettable, finally, because so many of our children are no longer here with us. They left us in a bar that bore the name of a cluster of stars. May their light endure in our memories.

Message to the youth delivered by three young people

Marie:

Bonjour à tous, buongiorno a tutte e a tutti, hello everyone

We speak these words of tribute to the victims of the fire in Crans-Montana with great emotion.

That night, which was supposed to mark the start of a new beginning, of new promises, was plunged into horror. My friends and I often used to meet in Crans-Montana, the resort that saw us grow up. That evening, we went into a bar opposite Le Constellation for a last drink, our hearts light and our minds free. But very quickly, everything froze. A heavy silence fills the room. The images assailing us are appalling.

Outside, the scene is worse than a nightmare. The piercing cries echo in the freezing cold. The smell of burning is unbearable. It's an apocalyptic scene.

We cannot forget what we saw that night, but we can turn it into strength.

So today, we pay tribute to you who are gone too soon, to your halted dreams, to your voices replaced by silence. For the families, let’s make sure that this suffering is not in vain. Let’s not wait any longer to tell those close to us that we love them. Let’s live life intensely, here and now.

Solal:

The tragedy that struck Crans-Montana was not limited to Valais and Switzerland, but was felt internationally.

Your presence here is testament to that.

I may be Swiss-French, but I realise that has no importance. Whatever our nationality or age, we feel collectively touched by and in solidarity with the suffering of all the victims and their families.

We were frustrated by the sense of powerlessness we felt in the face of this fire. That’s why we’d like to thank the police, the firefighters, first responders and everyone else who lent their assistance.

Of course, we haven’t forgotten the medical staff in Valais and the hospitals in Switzerland and abroad who received the victims with severe burns.

We offer our full support to the injured, aware of the road they have left to travel.

Aline:

Ai giovanni che ci ascoltano : siamo una generazione che cresce in un mondo difficile e fragile. Eppure, nonostante tutto, continuiamo a credere e a lottare per ciò che conta davvero.
C’è ancora tanto da fare, ma ammiriamo profondamente i giovani che non si arrendono, che seguono ciò che li fa vibrare, che difendono i loro valori e le persone che amano. Ogni sforzo conta, anche quello che nessuno vede.

Forse non ce lo dicono abbastanza, quindi vogliamo dirvelo noi: siamo fieri di voi. Restate forti, non lasciatevi abbattere e vivete pienamente ogni istante. Non possiamo aggiungere giorni alla vita, ma possiamo aggiungere vita ai giorni.

To the young people listening to us: we are a generation growing up in a fragile world that is sometimes hard and often unfair. And yet, despite the doubts, despite the fear, our generation continues to move forward. It continues to fight for what it believes in.

Yes, there is still such a lot to be done: So many things to repair, to rebuild, to dream differently. But we also see young people who stand up, who refuse to give in, who fight for what inspires them.

Never forget why you’re fighting. Never forget who you’re fighting for. Every effort counts, even those that nobody sees. You give your best, with what you have, in a world that doesn't always spare you. Maybe we don't tell you enough, maybe never... so let us tell you today: we’re proud of you.

Stay strong, stay on your feet, and while the sun shines, make the most of every moment, no matter how fragile. You can’t add days to life, but you can add life to days.

Tribute to the victims
Olivia Seigne

Since my inception, I have been connected.
Without the cord between me and my mother, I could not grow.
I have been attached since my childhood.
The bond supports me,
nourishes me,
empowers me,
holds me,
contains me.

When the connection is severed,
When the tie is sundered, it is the two of us who die...
When this bond breaks, suffering knows no bounds:
Everything inside me screams, refusing to accept the rupture.

What suffers is the life within me.
Grief is the other side of love.

But I will not die with you.

For who will speak of you if I do?
Who will remember your name?
Who will carry you in the temple of their heart?

My love.
Tied to you,
connected by this strange invisible umbilical cord,
I have discovered things I could never have learned without you.
I have become more than I was before I knew you.
Much more.

And that is something that can never be taken from me.
I am proof that you have existed.
You will remain alive as long as I continue to live.
I will say your name, and you will not be forgotten.

Text: Alix Noble Burnand, Thanatologist, 7 January 2026