NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

NAJC POSITION STATEMENT:

Statement made on June 15, 2023 by Czech President Petr Pavel

Winnipeg, Manitoba – July 14, 2023

On June 15, 2023, Czech President Petr Pavel stated that Russians living abroad should be put under strict surveillance by intelligence services in their host countries. "I can be sorry for these people but at the same time, when we look back, when the Second World War started, all the Japanese population living in the United States were under a strict monitoring regime as well," said the Czech president. "That's simply a cost of war."

Pavel's statement was immediately condemned by the Japanese American National Museum (JANM). "To suggest that this shameful chapter of American history was an acceptable 'cost of war' is a denial of the great injustice that was committed. To further suggest that people of any group should be treated similarly today flies in the face of the hard-fought lessons accrued from that history," said Ann Burroughs, President and CEO of JANM.

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, former NAJC president Art Miki publicly expressed his concern that some people would blame Russian Canadians for the actions of their ancestral country, similar to the way Japanese Canadians were treated during World War II. Miki's family were among the almost 22,000 Japanese Canadians who were forcibly uprooted from the British Columbia coast, dispossessed of their properties, incarcerated and not allowed to return until 1949—four years after the end of the war and far longer than the restrictions placed on Japanese Americans. Miki feared that there would be acts of racism and aggression towards innocent Russian Canadians as easy targets and scapegoats for the war in the Ukraine, in the same way that Chinese and other Asian Canadians became the victims of racism because of the perceived origin of COVID-19.

NAJC supports the statements by JANM and by Art Miki, and denounces the June 15, 2023 statement by Czech President Petr Pavel.