

Speech
Mr. Eduardo Eurnekian
Chairman
The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation
Bestowal Ceremony of the Raoul Wallenberg Medal to
H.E. The President of the Hellenic Republic
KAROLOS PAPOULIAS
Athens, 18 November 2013

Dear Mr. President,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to be here, together with my friend and founder of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, Mr. Baruch Tenenbaum.
Today we present the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Medal to His Excellency, the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Karolos Papoulias.

This award is bestowed in order to pay tribute to all the Greek Holocaust heroes who reached out and saved scores of victims of the Shoah, women and men who chose not to stand idly by in face of evil and stretched a caring hand to those who were persecuted by the Nazi murderous machine.

Today we are particularly honored with the presence of two women who symbolize the essence of this ceremony. One is Katia Mavrogeorgiou Aggelopoulous, daughter of Mimis and Maria Aggelopoulos, who save the life of two Jewish children during the German occupation.

The other person is Eftychia Nachman, who as a 10 year-old girl, together with her brother Jacob, was sheltered for 8 months at the Aggelopoulous house. Till this very day, Eftychia and Katya are close and inseparable friends.

Likewise, we are honored by the presence of Mr Benjamin Albalas, President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, who, as a child, during the Shoa, he managed to survive thanks to the courage and kindness of fellow non-Jewish Greeks, who offered him a warm shelter.

Greece is a small country but it has its share of rescuers. More than 300 women and men have been officially recognized and we are still working to shed light on more cases of rescue which remain unknown. That is why we have an eternal debt of gratitude to the Greek Rescuers and we are committed to instill their legacies in the hearts and minds of the young generations that look for role models.

The history of Greece is characterized by a struggle for freedom. Throughout its long life, it had to face numerous domination attempts by external forces.

The legacy of the Greek people could be summarized by the words of Nelson Mandela:

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” And this is precisely the type of freedom we are referring to today, in this ceremony: Thou shall love thy neighbor like thyself” would be its motto.

This Greek spirit of freedom was clearly reflected in the wake of President Papoulia’s visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, last July, when he stated: “Our duty is to preserve the memory of the tragedy brought about by the Nazi forces.

Whoever denies the sacrifice and deprivation of life of people who found their way here has no right to belong to the European family,”

On a personal note, as a son of Armenia, I am deeply moved to be here in Greece. Both our peoples have long-standing political, cultural and religious ties and share a set of common roots and values, especially the struggle against oppression and the search of freedom.

As we celebrate the centenary of Wallenberg's birth, we have multiplied our activities and also launched a significant reward of half a million Euros for reliable and scientifically verifiable information that could lead us to discover the true fate and whereabouts of this Swedish hero and of his chauffeur, Vilmos Langfelder.

Dear guests, we hope that this award will serve to elevate the recognition of righteous humanitarian actions.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Our congratulations to His Excellency, the President of the Hellenic Republic for this merited recognition.

Thank you.