

Speech

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Chairman

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Bestowal Ceremony of the Raoul Wallenberg Medal to

**H.E. The President of the European Commission**

**Jose Manuel Barroso**

Brussels – March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Dear President Barroso, distinguished Ambassadors, community and religious dignitaries;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to be here, in Brussels, in the heart of the European Union, together with my friend and founder of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, Baruj Tenenbaum.

We feel very much at home in Brussels, the capital of Belgium and the de-facto capital of the European Union. Belgium, as a country, has its share of rescuers from the Holocaust years. More than 1,600 individuals have been officially recognized as Righteous among the Nations and some of them were identified thanks to our research work. We should also remember that the European Parliament has instituted March 6<sup>th</sup> as the European Day of the Righteous, following an initiative from our friends at G.A.R.I.W.O., an initiative that counts on our full support. We have called upon all the countries in the American continent and asked that they too proclaim March 6<sup>th</sup> as the Day of the Righteous Rescuer.

Today we are bestowing the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Medal upon His Excellency, the President of the European Commission, Mr. Jose Manuel Barroso, as a gesture of personal recognition of his efforts, and to the European Commission, for their unwavering commitment to human rights and legacies of Raoul Wallenberg and his likes.

Our NGO's mission is to research and divulge the spirit of this solidarity as displayed by the Swedish diplomat Wallenberg and many others. One such example is a noble fellow countryman of President Barroso, the Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa

Mendes, who as Consul General in Bordeaux, went out of his way to save innocent people persecuted by the Nazis, ignoring orders from his Government, and eventually paying a high price for his courageous actions.

In the case of Raoul Wallenberg, we must emphasize that he was a hero, but also a victim. In fact, he was imprisoned by the Soviets on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945, never to be seen again. We are committed to discover what happened to him, and in this context we have instituted a 500,000 Euro reward for any scientifically-reliable information regarding his fate.

We thank President Barroso and the European Commission for their invaluable support in this struggle. We know that, with you, we have here a staunch ally in our quest to bring Raoul back home.

In this respect, I think you will understand and forgive me for taking this opportunity to urge the European countries to intervene and prompt both Russia and Sweden to help us understand what happened to Raoul Wallenberg. A crucial step would be to call upon the Russian authorities to open-up their KGB archives and allow unfettered access to scholars and historians, as this could shed light into the fate and whereabouts of the Swedish diplomat.

Dear guests, we trust that this award will help us to enhance our mission by highlighting the recognition of noble humanitarian action and by putting at the top of our agenda the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, one of the greatest heroes known by mankind.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.