

SPEECH WASHINGTON: Eduardo Eurnekian

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Distinguished senators, congressmen, Ambassadors, religious dignitaries, community leaders, relatives of Raoul Wallenberg, Professor Irwin Cotler, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to begin by thanking the "**Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission**", led by Mr. Ezra Friedlander, for organizing this moving event.

I also wish to thank all of our guests, **especially those close relatives of Raoul Wallenberg**, who honor us today with their presence, including:

- his sister, Nina Lagergren,
- his sister-in-law, Matti von Dardel,
- and his nieces, Louise von Dardel and Marie Dupuy.

Professor Irwin Cotler . . . thank you for being here with us today. You are a **true defender of human rights**, and it is a great honor to have you here.

Spiritually present with us today, is the **late Professor Guy von Dardel**, Raoul Wallenberg's half-brother.

Although he was a distinguished scientist, with his own responsibilities, von Dardel dedicated a large part of his life, to trying to bring Wallenberg home.

He is represented here by **his wife Matti** . . . and his daughters, **Louise and Marie**. We are very pleased that you are all here to share in this moment.

And I add a very special word of appreciation, for my dear friend, **Baruch Tenenbaum**, founder of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

It was he who invited me to become chairman of this **very special Foundation** . . . one that has given me much more than I could ever have given to it in return.

As you may know, **my origins are traced to Armenia** where my parents were born.

It is from there that they emigrated to Argentina, in the early twentieth century.

As an heir of the Armenian culture, it's traditions and legacy, I feel a **certain identification with both**, the history and the future of the Jewish people.

Apart from great suffering, **both the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust**, served to create a common culture and a collective conscience, focused on the need to educate, so that **these events are never again repeated**.

As Chairman of the Wallenberg Foundation, **I have been blessed, with a channel to communicate our message of solidarity**, through educational and public awareness programs.

Embracing Raoul Wallenberg as our example, the Foundation highlights **civic heroes** from the past, to address international and ethnic conflicts, **by sharing and implementing positive educational messages.**

A favorite example of mine is **Norwegian philanthropist, Fridtjof Nansen**, benefactor and savior of the Armenian people.

Thanks to his humanitarian efforts, **thousands of displaced and persecuted Armenians** avoided certain death.

In fact, my mother and father **would never have arrived to Argentina**, if it were not for the famous "Nansen Passport".

Like Raoul Wallenberg, **Nansen was a beacon of light and hope**, in the midst of one of the most tragic chapters of modern history.

These rescuers . . . who showed great civic courage in their actions . . . have taught us **the power of solidarity**, the sacred value of human life, and **the need to build bridges** between both, human beings and nations.

"Raoul Wallenberg . . . the Swedish savior of almost 100,000 Jewish men, women, and children . . . what he did . . . what he accomplished . . . **was of biblical proportions.**

He was awarded honorary United States Citizenship in 1981.

Sir Winston Churchill, was the only person to have received such honor at that time.

John F. Kennedy, when referring to Churchill, said: ``**Indifferent himself to danger, he wept over the sorrows of others.**"

That compassion is also exemplified in the man we are gathered, to honor here today.

In 1944, the United States requested Sweden's cooperation, **in protecting the lives of Hungarian Jews**, facing extermination at the hands of the Nazis.

In the months that followed, the United States **supplied the funds and the directives**, and Raoul Wallenberg supplied **the courage and the passion.**

How can we comprehend the moral worth of a man, who saved so many lives, **including those of U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos and his wife?**"

One of Thomas Jefferson's favorite thinkers was Cicero.

He said: "**To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born, is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors, by the records of history?**"

But then, from the past, our gaze must be cast forward to that imaginary place, where the wildest of dreams can come true.

I imagine a **just and peaceful integration of different peoples**, with **different cultures**, resulting from **mutual understanding and dialogue**.

We must never forget the past, but, **at the same time**, we must look to the future responsibly, **with an eye on our future generations**.

Peace, is the result of proactive justice and solidarity. It does not simply materialize, it is **built and defended !**

Raoul Wallenberg was a man of privilege and social stature, who refused to allow himself to be contained by his circumstances.

Instead, he was determined to **go beyond** what was expected of him . . . he was **determined to make a difference**.

Let me finish with a remark, shared by President Ronald Reagan, at the 40th anniversary of Wallenberg's disappearance:

I quote:

"In the depths of the horrors of World War 2, Raoul Wallenberg was a **shining light of inspiration**, upholding the honor of the human race. The world owes **a tremendous and eternal debt** to this great man".

In the name of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, please allow me to state that we are **truly pleased and honored**, to see this great man presented with the Congressional Gold Medal.

I extend **a warm thank you**, to the men and women of both, **the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives**, and look forward to seeing everyone at this afternoon's Ceremony.