



Jill Blonsky

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a matter of immense pride to be representing the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation at today's award ceremony. The IRWF is a global Non-Government Organization with offices on four continents. With our main base in New York, we have branches in Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv and Berlin. Our membership includes no fewer than 300 former and incumbent heads of state; as well as Nobel Peace Laureates and many other notable people from all walks of life, nationalities and religions, not least among whom is His Holiness Pope Francis I.



As its name suggests, the purpose of the IRWF is to continue and promote the legacy of humanity of Raoul Wallenberg and his outstanding efforts and achievements, saving the Jews of Budapest from the monstrosity of the Nazi death machine. But the Foundation also recognizes and cherishes the work of other rescuers who have sought to save lives regardless of the nationality, race or religion of those they rescue or the dangers they often themselves face. One of our recent projects, for instance, involved researching the 1915 Armenian genocide and compiling the names of Turkish citizens who rescued ethnic Armenians during that dreadful time. Another ongoing project is the "Houses of Life" – the search for houses, convents and other buildings where Jews, mainly children were hidden during the Holocaust. This project began life as an idea but has now turned into a major undertaking as hundreds of these places have been uncovered. As a result, many have been commemorated with plaques explaining their amazing histories of rescue.

In 2013 the Foundation recognized and honored the work of Sir Nicholas Winton who organized the train transport of 669 Jewish children in 1938 from Prague to the United Kingdom. I had the honor of interviewing him at that time when he was aged 102 and he outwitted me on virtually every question I asked. I haven't felt like a schoolgirl for many years but on that day I felt very young and very small. He was an incredible character who captivated everyone he met with his wit and humor. Later that year the Foundation awarded him The Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Medal for his kindertransport work. The Chairman of the IRWF, Mr. Eduardo Eurnekian and its founder, Baruch Tenenbaum, flew especially to London to attend the event. Mr. Eurnekian defined this encounter with the then 104-year old Winton as both moving and intellectually inspiring.

Now that Sir Nicky is no longer with us, it is up to us to keep his memory and work alive and it is in this context that we are assembled today to congratulate Mr. Matej Minac and Mr. Patrik Pass on the production of their film, "Nicky's Children" which will achieve this aim. It is ever important that we learn from history in order not to repeat it and this film will contribute towards keeping the warnings alive.

In conclusion, I have the pleasure of conveying to Mr. Minac and Mr. Pass the gratitude of our Chairman Eduardo Eurnekian and our Founder, Mr. Baruch Tenenbaum, and we would also like to thank Her Excellency Ambassador Li, the Swedish ambassador, for hosting this event.