

Mr. Per Westerberg, The Speaker of the Swedish Parliament

Members of the Raoul Wallenberg family, distinguished guests. We are here today because of one remarkable man and his heroic deeds. Indeed today is very special as it dates exactly seventy years ago that Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest. He was a businessman acting on a Swedish diplomatic mission financed by the US War Refugee Board. Through creativity and enormous courage he saved tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews from perishing in the Holocaust. Many of the people he saved ended up in the United States and perhaps some of their descendants are among us today.

Wallenberg serves as a reminder for our moral responsibility, our obligation to respond to the forces that challenged democracy and human rights, obligation to prevent genocide because sadly, history has repeated itself. We have seen atrocities in - for example - Cambodia, Rwanda, on the Balkans, since World War II.

There are a lot of people who had worked tirelessly for Wallenberg's legacy. I would like to thank Nina Lagergren and late Guy von Dardel for dedicating their lives to inform the world about the heroic deeds of Wallenberg, as well as their battle to find out what happened to their half-brother. I would like to commemorate the late congressman Thomas Lantos, who himself was rescued by Wallenberg for initiating the process to make Wallenberg an Honorary Citizen of the United States. I would also like to thank Senator Gillibrand, Kirk, and Levin, and Congressman Meeks and the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, especially Baruch Tenenbaum and Eduardo Eurnekian, The Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission, Peter Rebenwurtzel and the Friedlander Group -especially Ezra Friedlander- for your dedicated hard work for making the Gold Medal for Raoul Wallenberg possible and for his legacy.

Wallenberg is a great role model. He has shown us that one man can make a difference. The need for courage and humanism shown by him, is, given what is happening around the world today, always relevant. For Sweden, Raoul Wallenberg is a source of pride. He also serves as an example for Swedish foreign policy, which strives to safeguard freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law. I am truly honored, as a Speaker of the Parliament and a Representative of Sweden to be here today.

Thank you very much.