

Congressional Gold Medal Effort for Raoul Wallenberg's Centennial Announced

Last Thursday, August 4, the world marked on the 99th birthday of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat whose heroism saved the remnants of Hungarian Jews during the waning days of the Holocaust.

Wallenberg produced protective passports and provided shelter to Jews that remained in Budapest. He is credited with saving an estimated 100,000 lives in a six-month period. As the world gears up for the centennial of Wallenberg's birth next year, the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission (RWCCC) was established and has announced today efforts to honor Raoul Wallenberg with a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor the U.S. Congress can bestow.

Wallenberg's actions and heroism are directly attributable to the U.S. War Refugee Board established in 1944 by President Roosevelt to save what was left of European Jewry. Indeed, today hundreds of thousands of American Jews are alive because of Raoul Wallenberg's heroic actions.

Throughout the next year, the RWCCC will work on a national campaign to highlight the incredible heroism exhibited by Wallenberg. The movement will also include the ceremonial naming of public streets in major U.S. municipalities as well as an educational component.

The Gold Medal effort will be introduced by senior House and Senate leadership in a bipartisan fashion. "We aim to have both Senate and House bills introduced by September 21 in a press conference and Congressional Luncheon on Capitol Hill that will be attended by a powerful array of



Raoul Wallenberg.

Congressional leaders," said Ezra Friedlander, Spokesperson for the commission and CEO of The Friedlander Group. "In a world where government is highly polarized, it is an encouraging sign to see Members of both parties gather behind the inspiring message of Mr. Wallenberg. We envision that 2012 will be summarized as the 'Year of Wallenberg,' in recognition of what one individual can achieve and indeed alter the fate of history for mankind and for generations to come. Today, on August 4, we pause and internalize what Raoul Wallenberg means for our community and the world at large," concluded Friedlander.

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Welcomes Presidential Action on Genocide

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum today welcomed the White House announcement of a new presidential directive aimed at strengthening the U.S. government's ability to prevent genocide and mass atrocities.

"This directive has the potential to save countless lives in the future," said Tom Bernstein, Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. "Tragically, during the Holocaust, no such mechanisms existed, and in the many decades since then, the United States and other governments have lacked the policies, structures, and political will to prevent



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such unspeakable crimes from being committed again. Today's presidential directive is an important step that the U.S. is taking toward realizing the vision of Never Again," he continued.

In the Presidential Directive on Mass Atrocities, President Obama noted that "66 years since the Holocaust and 17 years after

Rwanda, the United States still lacks a comprehensive policy framework and a corresponding interagency mechanism for preventing and responding to mass atrocities and genocide." The directive seeks to address this through the creation of a standing interagency Atrocities Prevention Board. This board would have the authority to develop prevention strategies and assure that threats of genocide are elevated to the very top levels of the government. The president also recognized that preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a "core national security interest" of the United States.

"We are gratified by the recognition that stopping genocide is not only a moral imperative but a crucial element of U.S. national security interests. Taking such a bold step firmly establishes America's leadership in the world on this critical issue," said Michael Chertoff, Chairman of the Committee on Conscience that directs the Museum's geno-

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