

Ministers,

My dear friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is special honour for me to be able to open the Wallenberg-year commemorating the human saviour Swedish diplomat.

The series of events in Hungary and Sweden accompanying the commemorative year is beginning today, organized by two countries in honour of a person, whose memory is one of the most important symbolic link between the two nations. The memory of a Swedish diplomat, who saved several tens of thousands of our Hungarian Jewish compatriots during the times of the terrible tragedy of the Holocaust. Therefore permit me to first greet among us, Carl Bildt, the head of Swedish diplomacy present here.

I would also like to warmly welcome Minister Yossi Peled, representing the government of the State of Israel, where Wallenberg is honoured as one of the “Righteous among the Nations”. Remembering the Righteous among the Nations is one of the things that is worth learning from Israel: the appreciation of those who stand for us in times of trouble and injustice, thus confessing their belief in universal human values.

It is important that we should also remember the Jewish and non-Jewish, Hungarian and Swedish helpers of Wallenberg. We have to mention Mrs. Miklósné Váli, the member of the Wallenberg Commemorative Commission, who while she was also persecuted during the Holocaust and owes her survival to Wallenberg, worked with him to speed up the issuing of the Schutz-passes as a typist.

Let us not forget the other human saviours either. The everyday people with healthy moral standing, who saved close or distant acquaintances, friends, colleagues or even complete strangers. People, who like Wallenberg, also saved their fellow humans while risking their own lives. Unfortunately there were not enough of them. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, it is especially painful for me

to say this: during the Holocaust the Hungarian state was weighed on the scales and found wanting. It could not protect its citizens, what's more – even if under foreign occupation – it assisted in their extermination. This is how hundreds of thousands of Jewish Hungarians became homeless in their own country, were deprived of their Hungarian status and their human existence. The fact that we made the conscious decision to open the Wallenberg commemorative year here in the Hungarian National Museum is itself a confession that our nation is leaving behind the dark spirit of the 20th century forever. Leaving it behind does not mean that we are not conscious of the responsibility, which is rooted in the fact that this inhuman chapter of history also took place in our country. We know that investigating our past and learning the lessons is more important than anything.

Raoul Wallenberg belonged to those members of this generation, who with their attitude also provided proof that – and let me allude to the words of Endre Ady, which were chosen as the motto of the commemorative year – *it is possible to remain human in the face of inhumanity*.

Yes, when we recall the activities of Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest, then on the one hand, we are remembering a personal drama. On the other, it is not only the personal, the human dimension that is important for us, but also the professional one. During the critical days of the Holocaust, Wallenberg served as a diplomat in Budapest and he had a special instrument in his hand, his own status. Aspects of a diplomat's life, the protection, "privileges and immunities" served as important instruments in the hands of Wallenberg during his work of saving humans. Those who take their own diplomatic profession seriously, will know very well what a responsibility this is. Wallenberg served as an example for diplomats of later times as well.

A commemorative year is always about the person we are remembering: who he was, what we see him to be; it is also about those that are remembering: who we are and what we consider ourselves to be? In remembering Raoul Wallenberg we confess that our ideals and values are identical to his. Just as the whole Holocaust is a tragedy for the entire humanity, the Hungarian Holocaust is a tragedy for all Hungarians, for the entire Hungarian nation.

We reiterated this in our recently published foreign policy strategy document, in which we stated that the basis for our European policy and our whole foreign policy is the mutual responsibility we have with our allies and international partners for the security, welfare and freedom of each other, of each other's citizens.

In this document we mention Israel with special emphasis. The security of people anywhere in the world is not indifferent for Hungary; however the Middle-East is especially important in this respect. Jews in Hungary and Israelis speaking Hungarian or having Hungarian descent are bound by family and friendly ties. These ties are especially valuable in the relations between the two countries.

When I open the Raoul Wallenberg Commemorative Year now, I am happy to emphasize that his person will in the future also bind Sweden, Hungary and Israel, even if it is to remember a sad period. His memory will be present forever in our relations with Sweden and Israel.

We know that because of the well-known historic circumstances, we cannot lay flowers on the grave of Wallenberg. Shedding light on the complete story of his life is still to happen, but is inevitable. His fate also reminds us that the nature of dictatorial ideologies is the same. They cannot put up, they cannot tolerate the truth.

Several events of the commemorative year are especially aimed at the youth. It is our shared responsibility to pass on the responsibility from generation to generation: it is not permitted to drift with the trends of history, but instead one should remain human in the face of inhumanity. I wish deep and intense common remembrance for everyone.