

WALLENBERG CITATION INITIATIVE

Confronting Anti-Semitism by Promoting the Spirit of Raoul Wallenberg
Second National Award Ceremony, Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building
Parliament Hill, Ottawa
June 19, 2017

Closing Remarks by M.C. David Kilgour

Thank you to MP and event sponsor David Sweet, Cantor Daniel Benlolo, Irish-Canadian musicians Kevin and Deirdre Dooley, violinist Ralitsa Tcholakova, and vocalist Floralove Katz.

Un grand merci a Rabbi Emeritus Steven Garten, nominated and introduced by Naima Sidow et Imam Mohamad Jebara, nominated and introduced by Merle Haltrecht-Matte, our national nominees for 2017.

Thanks to Vera/George Gara, and Daniel Stringer.

Out of concern for growing anti-Semitism, nationally and internationally, a diverse group of Ottawa residents launched the Wallenberg Citation Initiative (WCI) with Holocaust survivors Vera and George Gara.

Our goal is to advocate against anti-Semitism by giving awards to persons who combat it at home and abroad often with personal risk to themselves.

In short, the WCI pushes back against a grave social evil in many lands by citing the courage of Raoul Wallenberg and honouring those who follow his lead. Others in the numerous countries occupied by Hitler did likewise, but Wallenberg is both the best-known world-wide and Canada's first honorary citizen.

Chancellor Angela Merkel

Our international honoree is Angela Merkel, who walks firmly in the footsteps of German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Anti-Nazi and a democrat, Adenauer's first major political office was as mayor of the city of Cologne, a position he held until the Nazis came to power in 1933. He was stripped of that post among other things because he refused to raise the swastika flag and shake hands with prominent Nazis. He was arrested late in the Third Reich but survived to see the end of Nazism and World War II.

"More than anyone, Adenauer personified Germany's return to the community of nations," Merkel says. She has described how he sought to embed Germany within Europe "as a community of destiny and shared values" as a means of overcoming the guilt the country had incurred and used trust-building as a way of preventing further wars in Europe. "We still have to keep investing in that trust," Merkel says.

The UK's *Independent* newspaper wrote earlier this year (Jan 17) that Merkel is pushing for a new law that will require Facebook to pay 'a catalogue of fines' if it fails to delete malicious

posts. If the proposal is successful, it will be the strongest regulation the networks face in any country where they operate



Much social media still operates outside limits that are set in the real world. In Germany, Merkel has responded by putting pressure on social media platforms to remove malicious posts from their web pages within 24 hours or face fines. She is the first leader to recognise that the only people who benefit from the promotion of incitement to violence and the culture of conspiracy theories are extremists, whether it's the far-right, far-left or ISIS recruiters.

Merkel's party said they will be pushing for a new law that will require Facebook and other networks to pay "a catalogue of fines" if they fail to respond to complaints and delete malicious posts in time. If the proposal is successful, it will be the strongest regulation the networks face in any country where they operate.

Social media networks have been too slow to take action themselves. A recent EU-funded survey showed that only 40 per cent of all notifications of alleged illegal online hate speech are currently reviewed under 24 hours. The same report also highlights the fact that the Jewish community is the biggest target on online hatred. It is unacceptable that law-abiding Jews should live in fear of attack and feel compelled to flee the country they love, as they have in France in their tens of thousands.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has said that he has 200 people in Germany working to remove racist posts and accepts its responsibility "unconditionally", so there is no excuse for other countries not to follow the lead set by the German Chancellor.

In conclusion, dear friends, Anti-Semitism is one of the gravest obstacles to the world of non-violence and peace we all seek because the mentality behind it threatens us all. Anti-Semitism is an evil that once unleashed runs a devastating course. It menaces anyone who falls out of favour with the mob. We must take our action to the world stage. *WCI* is planning an international award ceremony at the United Nations in New York, this September, with the inauguration of the international level of the *Raoul Wallenberg Citation for Moral Courage in the Face of Anti-Semitism*.

Thank you.