

Team 29 Statement

Raoul Wallenberg's Niece Challenges Russian Court's Refusal to Provide Information about Wallenberg's Fate

Mme Marie von Dardel-Dupuy, the niece of the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, a hero of the World War II who saved tens of thousands of Jews from the Holocaust and disappeared in the Soviet prison in 1947, filed an appeal with the Moscow City Court, seeking to overturn an earlier decision by the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow. This past September, the Court had upheld the refusal of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) to provide access to key documents about Wallenberg and release their uncensored copies. The decision to appeal the verdict was announced by Ivan Pavlov, JD, PhD, Attorney at Law and leader of 'Team 29', a group of St. Petersburg's lawyers, Russia, that represents Mme von Dardel-Dupuy in the proceedings.

“The question of Raoul Wallenberg’s fate is one of the greatest mysteries in modern Russian history. The documents my client has requested are already 70 years old so that direct access should be given to them”, Pavlov explains. “Despite many requests and applications filed by Wallenberg’s immediate family and by historians to Russian government bodies throughout the last decades, Russian authorities still refuse to provide the documents in question. An attempt to obtain access to the information by judicial procedure has not yet succeeded but we will contest the Court's decision; if necessary, all the way up to the Constitutional Court of Russia and the European Court for Human Rights”.

In March 2017, Mme von Dardel-Dupuy, who is the administrative plaintiff in this court case, submitted several requests to the FSB, asking for access to a number of documents of the Internal (Lubyanka) Prison and the Lefortovo Prison for 1945-1947. According to the official version of both Soviet and Russian authorities, Raoul Wallenberg died of heart attack in the summer of 1947, in Lubyanka Prison, yet the full circumstances of his alleged death and his imprisonment have never been officially verified. The issue could be solved with records from the FSB archives, but so far, Russian authorities have provided to researchers only partial, censored copies of the required records while access to originals has not been permitted up to now. Moreover, Mme von Dardel-Dupuy has never been provided with any archival documents at all, not even censored copies.

The Central Archive of the FSB refused to provide the information requested by Mme von Dardel-Dupuy, so that she in July 2017, supported by Team 29’s lawyers and the Raoul

Wallenberg Research Initiative (RWI-70), filed a claim with the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow, asking to reconsider the unlawful FSB decision.

On September 18, 2017, the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow rejected the claim, referring to the presence of "private information of third persons" in the documents requested.

"In October 1989, President Mikhail Gorbachev invited Raoul Wallenberg's family to Moscow to tell us the truth about Raoul's fate. 28 years later, we are still waiting to learn all the facts. During the court hearing on September 18, 2017 the legal representatives of the [Russian] Federal Security Service (FSB) completely misrepresented the basic facts of my request. I remain determined to pursue all possible avenues to obtain access to the information Russian authorities possess about my uncle's fate. After more than 70 years, there cannot possibly remain any reason why Russian authorities will not release documents that can shed light on what happened to him", states Mme von Dardel-Dupuy.

Note

Raoul G. Wallenberg, a Swedish businessman and diplomat, saved tens of thousands of Jews in Budapest from Nazi persecution during World War II. In January 1945, he was detained by the Soviet military counterintelligence units. He was transferred to Moscow where he was put in the Internal (Lubyanka) Prison. According to the official Soviet and Russian version of his fate, Wallenberg died in the Lubyanka Prison of a heart attack on July 17, 1947 but this information has never been confirmed.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, an International Commission, created by Wallenberg's brother, Dr. Guy von Dardel, and later, a bilateral Swedish-Russian Working Group, investigated Raoul Wallenberg's fate in Russia for ten years. Copies of documents provided to the Working Group by the Russian government were heavily censored and original archival files have remained inaccessible to independent researchers. After 2001, two researchers (Dr. Vadim Birstein and Susanne Berger) continued a formal dialogue with the FSB Central Archive. As a result of this exchange, FSB archivist in 2009 released information that the interrogation registers of Lubyanka Prison allegedly contain information about an unidentified *Prisoner no. 7* who was questioned on 23 July 1947. In an official letter addressed to the two researchers, FSB archivists wrote that *Prisoner no. 7* "in great likelihood" is identical with Raoul Wallenberg.

They based their conclusion on strong circumstantial evidence, including the fact that *Prisoner no. 7* had been questioned together with Raoul Wallenberg's driver, Vilmos Langfelder, for a full 16 1/2 hours. The sudden appearance of this information shows that Russian archives still contain many materials with direct relevance for Wallenberg's fate that were not previously shared with investigators. In the autumn of 2016, Raoul Wallenberg's family and a group of researchers representing the Raoul Wallenberg Research Initiative (RWI-70) traveled to Moscow to officially present to Russian authorities a comprehensive list of all questions the Russian government must answer before the question of Wallenberg's fate can be laid to rest. So far, no response has come from the Russian side.

The Raoul Wallenberg Research Initiative (RWI-70) is an informal international association including historians, legal experts, Holocaust survivors, family members of former political prisoners and human rights defenders who pool their expertise in order to clarify Raoul Wallenberg's fate in the Soviet Union. To achieve this aim, the RWI-70 works to obtain access to relevant files that currently remain classified in Russian and other international archive collections.

Team 29 is an informal association of lawyers and journalists defending Freedom of information in Russia. Located in St. Petersburg, one of Team 29's most important project is a campaign for declassification of records from the former Soviet State Security bodies to seek access to historical archives and assist families of victims of repression to obtain information about their loved ones.

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