

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Press release

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Raoul Wallenberg – Joint Russian–Swedish press release

The joint Russian–Swedish working group to investigate the fate of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg was established in 1991. Today, 12 January 2001, the group is presenting accounts on its work: one expressing the view of the Russian side and the other the position of the Swedish side. With this the group is concluding its work.

The decision to publish two reports was taken during the initial stage of the investigation. One of the reasons for this is that, despite their common approach to gaining clarity on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, the two countries have different views on the need for material that reveals the actual background to the events and interprets some of these in different ways. Another reason is that the conclusions are not identical in every detail, which might have been foreseen.

Both sides pay tribute to Raoul Wallenberg and his self-sacrificing and invaluable efforts to save Jews in Hungary. The trials that befell him from January 1945 arouse deep bitterness and compassion. His illegal arrest and imprisonment and subsequent actions of the Soviet authorities concerning the Swedish diplomat are a great tragedy. Irrespective of the fact that the concrete circumstances surrounding these events are still not exactly known, the actions of the authorities at the time must be regarded both in Russia and in Sweden as criminal.

In the Swedish report it is established that in the present situation it does not seem possible to draw any definite conclusion about the real fate of Raoul Wallenberg. However it is clear that events which took place in 1947 were decisive for the Swedish diplomat.

The main conclusion of the Russian report is that the Swedish diplomat died in 1947 in one of the Soviet MGB's prisons, and that to continue searching for him is pointless. No reliable written information on the circumstances surrounding his death have been found, however there are indirect signs and verbal evidence that witness to his death having been occasioned by violence.

At the same time it must be emphasised that both sides have taken account of each other's opinions during the course of the work, and cooperation within the group has been fruitful and in many ways unparalleled, even if it has not always been unproblematical. The group has not succeeded in establishing any common, legally indisputable conclusion on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, but it has succeeded in doing a lot to create an atmosphere of confidence between Russia and Sweden in this matter.

The working group has established many previously unknown facts, at the same time as it has discovered the unfortunate disappearance of a series of key documents from Russian archives in circumstances that remain unclear. Presumably this suggests that efforts have been made to cover the tracks of illegal actions by the Soviet authorities. Thus there are still contradictory versions concerning the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. There are still unanswered questions.

In the light of the above the Russian and Swedish sides are prepared to take part in further necessary investigations and also to strive to find answers to the remaining questions.

Both sides are addressing themselves to all those who may be in possession of important and hitherto unknown additional information on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. We ask them to respond and pass on their information to the governments of Russia and Sweden.

The Russian and Swedish sides would like to express their thanks to all those who have contributed to this investigation, in both the countries or elsewhere.