

Raoul Wallenberg's Family Sues the Russian FSB, Demanding to Provide Information on His Fate

Relatives of Raoul Wallenberg, a hero of World War II who saved tens of thousands of Jews from the Holocaust and disappeared in Soviet prisons in 1947, today filed a claim against the Federal Security Service of Russia (FSB) with the Meschansky District Court of Moscow. In the claim, the family requests the Russian State Security Agency to provide original and uncensored copies of documents about Wallenberg, says Ivan Pavlov, chief attorney and leader of Team 29, the group that will represent the legal interests of Wallenberg's family in Russian courts. The Raoul Wallenberg Research Initiative (RWI-70), also supports the claim. The family of the missing diplomat intends to obtain access to the FSB's archive records that were earlier provided not full and censored.

"The fate of Raoul Wallenberg is one of the greatest mysteries in Russian history. The documents sought by Wallenberg's family are already more than seventy years old, so access to them should be granted," Pavlov says. "Despite of a lot of requests and applications submitted to Russian governmental bodies by the family and historians during the last decades, the Russian authorities still refuses to provide original documents. We are now ready to seek information by means of judicial procedures. This case is not only a chance to restore the memory of an outstanding person but also a strong argument in our struggle for opening of archives belonging to the FSB and to other governmental bodies. If we manage to obtain more information in this case and clarify the Wallenberg mystery, we will set an important legal precedent which will be very helpful in our continuing struggle for unhindered access to governmental information."

In March 2017, Wallenberg's family filed a formal request with the FSB, asking the agency's archive to provide access to original documents of the Internal (Lubyanka) Prison and the Lefortovo Prison for the years 1945-1947. According to claims made by the Soviet and Russian governments, Wallenberg died from a heart attack in Lubyanka Prison in the summer of 1947. However, this claim has never been independently corroborated. FSB archive records could clarify the circumstances of Wallenberg's fate, but Russian authorities have provided only partial, censored copies of the documents in question; neither Wallenberg's family nor researchers have managed to obtain access to the original pages.

Marie Dupuy, the Swedish diplomat's niece, issued the following comment about the legal action: "I have taken this step reluctantly and only after numerous requests to Russian authorities over many years, publicly and privately, by myself, by expert historians and Swedish officials, have failed to yield any results. Raoul's family has fought for more than seven decades to discover the truth about his fate. In recent years, it has become evident that Russian archival collections contain documents with direct relevance for Raoul's fate that neither his family nor independent experts have been allowed to review. Our search for answers will continue until we know what happened to Raoul Wallenberg, and why."

Reference Note

Raoul G. Wallenberg, a Swedish businessman and diplomat, saved tens of thousands of Jews in Budapest, Hungary, from Nazi persecution during World War II. In January 1945, Wallenberg was detained by Soviet military intelligence units. He was subsequently moved to Moscow and taken to Lubyanka Prison. According to the official Russian version of his fate, he died in that prison on July 17, 1947, from a heart attack. However, this information has never been confirmed.

In 1991, an official Swedish-Russian working group was created in order to investigate Wallenberg's disappearance; it worked until 2001. Unfortunately, documents provided to the group by the Russian government were heavily censored and many files remained inaccessible to independent researchers.

Only in 2009 did two researchers (Berger, Birstein) learn from the Central Archive of the Russian State Security Service (FSB) that the interrogation registers of Lubyanka Prison allegedly contain information about an unidentified Prisoner no. 7 who was questioned on 23 July 1947. This Prisoner no. 7 was part of a special group of prisoners who had direct connection with the Wallenberg case and who were all questioned during that fateful night. FSB archivists concluded that Prisoner no. 7 "in great likelihood" is identical with Raoul Wallenberg. They based their conclusion on 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. So far, researchers have not been allowed to review the relevant entries.

Disclosure of this and other information that had not been available to previous investigators confirms that Russian archives contain important materials related to Wallenberg's fate.

In the autumn of 2016, during a visit to Moscow, Wallenberg' family and a delegation of the RWI-70 provided a comprehensive list of open questions and requests in the Wallenberg case to Russian authorities. So far, they have not received a satisfactory answer.

The Raoul Wallenberg Research Initiative (RWI-70) is an informal international alliance of historians, legal experts, Holocaust survivors, former political prisoners and human rights defenders. The initiative's main goal is to establish the full circumstances of Raoul Wallenberg's fate, by seeking access to still classified documentation in Russia and other international archives.

The Team 29 is an informal association of Russian lawyers and journalists defending the right to free access to information. A key direction of Team 29's activities is the campaign for declassification of archives belonging to the agencies of the Soviet State Security Services and to offer assistance to people seeking information about their family members who fell victim to political repression.

Selected Media Reports

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<https://warontherocks.com/2016/09/a-cold-war-execution-most-foul-too-early-to-close-the-book-on-the-raoul-wallenberg-case/>
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