

**Wystąpienie Pana Wicepremiera, ministra spraw zagranicznych
Radosława Sikorskiego w czasie ceremonii wręczenia Nagrody
Solidarności im. Lecha Wałęsy**

Dear Chairman of the Chapter,

Mr Secretary of State,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

45 years ago the workers of the Lenin shipyard in Gdańsk did something extraordinary. They went on strike, not only to demand the rise in wages but to demand a representation. They said to the communism party despite your ideology, you do not represent us. What we need in communism Poland is a free and independent trade union. As a result of the strike and the Lenin shipyard and all of the Poland they got that. And the leader of that strike was Lech Wałęsa – the world historical figure who happens to be in United States right now, we have with us his son, representing his father. Lech Wałęsa has become symbol of nonviolent and successful struggle for ability.

Struggle for freedom, democracy, and liberation from communist oppression that was imposed by the Soviet Union on Poland and other European countries at the end of World War II.

Solidarity, the name of the trade Union and a word that we hold holy in Poland, the mass protest movement - founded in 1980, survived despite

the imposition of martial law and other repressions, eventually leading to democratic elections and a peaceful transfer of power.

The events in Poland triggered a virtuous domino and were followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the fall of the Soviet Union itself.

Lech Wałęsa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. He was a worth of it as a appreciation of what he had already done but also as a sign of the encouragment and it means of supporting his struggle for liberty.

Thank God, he was not alone. Friends around the world lend Poles a helping hand on their path to democracy. After the martial law was imposed, President Ronald Reagan showed his solidarity with the Polish people by lighting a candle in his window on Christmas Eve 1981 and encouraged Americans to do the same. January 30th 1982 was declared Solidarity Day with Poland. We remembered it very well and appreciation it.

Polish democratic opposition received not only spiritual but also material support from the US. We made good use of this assistance and today we can help others.

Established in 2014, the Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Prize a 1 mln złoty which is around 3 hundred thousand dollars today is an award for outstanding achievements in defending democracy, human rights and civil liberties.

Its past laureates include Mustafa Dzhemilev – the leader of the Crimean Tatars; Zhanna Nemtsova – a journalist, social activist, and daughter of the

assassinated Russian dissident Boris Nemtsov; and Pavel Latushka – a Belarusian dissident and pro-democracy advocate.

Today, it is my privilege and honour to present this award to an extraordinary person whose courage, resilience, and dedication have made her a symbol of freedom and dignity in Cuba and beyond – Berta Soler Fernández.

There are some striking parallels between the life and struggles of today's laureate and that of Lech Wałęsa. Berta Soler could not come to receive the award. Just as Lech Wałęsa did not go to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for fear that he would not be able to return home.

Devotion to their homeland is a fundamental value for both of them. Berta Soler's attitude, like Wałęsa's, is unwavering, systematic, and peaceful.

She joined protests against the 2003 imprisonment of over 70 Cubans arrested for so-called “counter-revolutionary” activities. Berta’s husband, Ángel Moya Acosta, was one of them. Together with wives and mothers of other detainees she protested by praying for them during Sunday masses and then – dressed in white – marching along Havana’s Fifth Avenue.

Lech Wałęsa also drew his strength from faith, which he saw as a moral guidepost.

Thanks to Ladies in White’s tenacity, as well as international support, the last prisoners arrested in 2003 were released in 2011.

Many were forced to emigrate. Berta and Angel remained in Cuba. They carried on despite repressions.

There is at least one more similarity between these two unique figures – Soler and Wałęsa. They are extraordinary yet ordinary people. Regular folks who took on an exceptionally heavy burden and did not buckle under the weight.

By honoring Berta Soler with the Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Award, we pay tribute to her, to Ladies in White and to all ordinary Cubans on the island and beyond, who are relentlessly demanding the right to have a say in the future of their homeland.

Many of them now live here, in Miami. They have not forgotten their roots – no matter when their families left Cuba, or how successful they became in the US. The presence of Marco Rubio – the son of Cuban immigrants and now the US Secretary of State – is yet another proof of this fact. Marco, thank you very much for joining us.