

REMARKS BY MARGARET CRAHAN
INTRODUCTION OF SUSANA RAFFALLI
WILSON AWARD FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Miami, Florida
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I am honored to introduce tonight's Public Service awardee, Susana Raffalli of Caritas, Venezuela.

All of us in this room are keenly aware of what is taking place in Venezuela today—a humanitarian and political crisis that tests the world's commitment to human rights and democracy, but especially tests those on the front lines, such as Susana Raffalli. It takes remarkable strength to fight for human rights and human dignity in adverse situations, and enormous courage to fight for the human rights of others.

Venezuelans—and all of us—are fortunate that there are courageous and committed people such as Susana Raffalli. As her biography in the program attests, Susana has had a very successful international career, working with major relief organizations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and the Americas.

It is thanks to people such as Susanna and civil society organizations such as Caritas that the fight for the prerequisites for life with dignity—including nutrition, decent housing, public health, and education—continues. Where these prerequisites are in jeopardy, societal stability and basic democratic principles are at risk. This is something Susana has witnessed in her many years of human rights and humanitarian work, most recently in Venezuela, her patria.

Sofía Sprachmann, Susana's colleague and close friend for over 20 years has noted Susana's "deep connection with human beings." She can arrive in a community, Sofía has said, and just by looking around, combine her clinical eye with the ability to capture social and power dynamics—within the household, the community, and the broader society—that all contribute to the denial of basic human rights. To fight for basic human rights conducive to life with dignity has resulted in a highly polarized Venezuela and threats against Susanna and some of her colleagues.

Another of Susanna's colleagues had this to say:

"Susana Raffalli is one of those social leaders who perhaps best symbolize the important work of civil society. She has done this with enormous professionalism. But more importantly, she has exercised that leadership without losing sight of her the following values: a concern for the most vulnerable, equal access to help for those in need, transparency, and strict rules guiding the distribution of humanitarian aid."

Her values are linked to a very deep personal commitment—that only a functioning democracy and the rule of law can allow Venezuelans, and all those living in extreme poverty, to regain their rights and the freedom to start building a more just future. Thank you, Susana, for your exemplary leadership. Congratulations.