

“The Americans of Ellis Island Have Brought Together Heart and Reason”

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The Minister of the Interior Angelino Alfano has visited the United States. Following are his thoughts on this visit to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum as presented at a press conference held at the Consulate General in New York. “At Ellis Island, the United States had set some strict rules: there were cases in which entry was denied,” he said, among other things.



The Minister of the Interior Angelino Alfano has been on a very short anti-terrorism & safety mission in the United States, where he held a series of meetings in both Washington and New York.

At the Department of Homeland Security he met with the Homeland Security Secretary, Jeh Johnson, at the Justice Department he met the Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, at the Cosmos Club in Washington he participated in a Round Table organized in collaboration with the European Institute. In New York he stopped at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, which was one of the topics discussed, along with a brief recap on all the institutional meetings he has had, at a press conference held at the Consulate General in New York which was attended by Ambassador Armando Varricchio and the Consul General Francesco Genuardi.

"The mission was successful because we have strengthened our cooperation in the fight against terrorism, cyber crime, and the delicate issue of global immigration. I will see both Jeh Johnson and Loretta at the G6 where they will represent the United States," Alfano said.

"Jeh Johnson and I wish to have a common platform to facilitate the exchange of information on biometric data and immigration issues. We both see the necessity of a strategy that changes the concept of security seen as total isolation in our own home countries. It's an old concept of security: we felt safe building walls and barriers but the world was different back then, now security is obtained with the mutual exchange of information and tips."

After this introduction the Minister covered his visit to Ellis Island: "The idea that millions of Italians came here makes us extremely grateful. We owe the United States a great slice of our freedom. We wouldn't be a free country if the United States hadn't participated the way they did in the Second World War."

"Another element of gratitude is right in those names carved in the benches, in those rooms where thousands of Italians came through. The visit was incredibly emotional and you leave feeling the happy ending lots of Italians found here in America."

Minister Alfano was also struck by the fact that: "Millions of Italians, among them thousands of Sicilians but also men and women from Northern Italy, crossed an ocean in search of freedom and well being. They looked for a better future, putting their lives at risk. Today their grandchildren and siblings are succeeding here in the United States."

He also stressed that: "The United States also had some strict rules: there were instances where entrance was forbidden. They were strict in the application of those rules: they brought together heart and reason, opportunity and responsibility. The opportunity of being in a country that opens its doors but also the responsibility to say some "nos." This is exactly what Italy and Europe must be able to do, by fusing together solidarity and responsibility because they are not antagonistic principles. The idea of solidarity does not exclude the responsibility to say no. The right to say no does not exclude solidarity otherwise Italy would lose itself."

We asked what he would tell his children once back in Italy, after this visit. Minister Alfano replied using Europe as a topic. "I'd tell my children that when I was a teenager in middle school I had to write essays on the "European Dream," and now, as a grown man, I am fighting to protect that dream from becoming a nightmare."

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