

ELIE WIESEL CONCLUDING REMARKS

# Concluding Remarks

Elie Wiesel :  
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Nobel Peace Laureate.

"I think I am the only non-physician in this hall, but some of my best friends are physicians. I like them when I need them, and if I don't, it is thanks to them.

In all sincerity, I wonder what I can add to the erudite and intelligent discussion on the subject before us. Perhaps I should tell you a hasidic tale told by the celebrated Rebbe Nahman of Bratzlav:

what I plan to do. I shall build a giant granary and store in it what remains from the present uncontaminated harvest. The doors will be locked to all citizens, but you. Yes, when all of us will enter madness, you and you alone will eat and remain sane. But then your task will be to go from town to town, from street to street, from house to house, shouting with all your might: men and women, do not forget that you



Tonight, as I listened to Dr Prusiner and Dr Eldad, our chairman and the distinguished speakers from Washington, who

reflected on the biological threats hanging over mankind, I had the feeling that they belonged to Trebbe Nahman's tale.

Students from past wars and tragedies know quite well that madness can enter History. It happened during the Crusades, the Inquisition and the irrational religious conflicts and persecutions. Can it happen now?

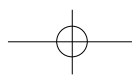
There were times when I thought the greatest peril to the world was nuclear. Now you tell me that I was wrong for, unlike bacteriological weapons, nuclear devices can be detected. But...who needs mighty weapons to destroy

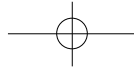
lives? The 9/11 nineteen suicide-hijackers did not have bombs, they did not even have guns. With bare hands they murdered three thousand men and women and inflicted pain and torment on their families.



Once upon a time, in a far away kingdom, the king heard from his astrologist that the next harvest would be cursed; anyone eating from it, will lose his sanity. So he summoned his best friend and told him: this is

are mad! Isn't this what we are all trying to do these days? On each occasion we repeat our anguished conviction that the world is going mad.





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And they have changed our own outlook on society, politics and security. They conditioned us to welcome body searches before boarding planes. And to suspect your neighbour: perhaps he or she is a terrorist.

Isn't this what has already happened in Israel? As I listened to General Eldad, I remembered his father. He was a true patriot, a great writer, a brilliant thinker. Had he ever imagined that his son would speak of a plan to vaccinate the entire country against sudden poisonous attack?

Israel is going through harrowing times. Last Saturday, three terrorists disguised as Israeli soldiers entered a small village near Hebron. The father was at the synagogue the family at home. When the shooting began, a little five-year old girl and her three-year old brother hid under the bed. The terrorist pulled her out and murdered her with a bullet in her head. I cannot get the little girl out of my mind. Did she ever see her assassin? He saw her. How can a human being look at a five-year old girl and then murder her? I tell you this story, because the next assassin could very well be using biological weapons of destruction and mass murder."

What could our defence be? What can so-

ciety do against enemies who are not afraid to die? In the media they are called suicide bombers. I call them suicide killers. They commit suicide, so as to kill more people. How could they be stopped?

As a teacher, I believe in. Is it also a response to today's terrorism? It is different from others. This time the terrorists killed and killed themselves without words. In the past, they would leave a trace behind. A written protest, a clear blackmail, a piece of paper saying that they demand the release of prisoners, the transfer of money, or a promise of surrender. This time, there was nothing. It was as if nineteen suicide-hijackers wanted us to know that we do not deserve their words. Death alone became their language. What then can we do to such human beings that use their inhumanity to serve Death?

I hope that there are psychiatrists amongst you. Perhaps they could tell us: What moves a person to turn into a murderer, a destroyer of dreams and aspirations, not only ours but those of his kinfolk?

I used to be a fervent supporter of the so-called Oslo agreements. Not that I trusted Arafat; but I trusted Itzhak Rabin. I felt

that if the agreements were good for the liberator of Jerusalem and the West Bank that he was, they were good for me too. Now I have doubts. I may have been mistaken. Somehow we might have been blinded by our optimism, by our persistent faith in humanity, by its everlasting desire for peace. Does it now mean that we believe that peace is not the solution? No, it is still the only solution. And yet, it is constantly being tested and sabotaged. Woe unto us: the 21st century, which should have brought promise, is now progressing under the shadow of terrorism, the new form of mass-murder.

And yet, and yet...  
we must never give up hope.

Remember Albert Camus' great novel, "The Plague"? At the conclusion of the story, filled with pain and agony and even despair, Dr Rieux says to himself: "There is more in the human being to celebrate than to denigrate. "Let us echo his words and say: in spite of the threats and the tears, in spite of the evil deeds by fanatic terrorists, there is more in life than in its enemy's power, there are more reasons in the human being to choose hope rather than resignation.

Mr Elie Wiesel

