



Elie Wiesel

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Nobel Peace Prize winner and Boston University Professor Elie Wiesel has worked on behalf of oppressed people for much of his adult life. His personal experience of the Holocaust has led him to use his talents as an author, teacher and storyteller to defend human rights and peace throughout the world.

Elie Wiesel's work has earned him the United States Congressional Gold Medal (1985) and the Medal of Liberty Award (1986); the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1992); the rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honor (2001); an honorary Knighthood of the British Empire awarded by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II (2006). He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. He is the recipient of more than one hundred and twenty honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning in the United States, Europe and Israel. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter appointed him Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. In 1980 he became Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council which created the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Elie Wiesel's more than fifty books have won numerous awards, including the *Prix Médicis* for *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, the *Prix Livre Inter* for *The Testament* and the Grand Prize for Literature from the City of Paris for *The Fifth Son*. Knopf will publish his latest novel, *A Mad Desire to Dance*, in February.

Elie Wiesel was born in Sighet, Transylvania Romania, (Hungary 1940-45). He was fifteen when he and his family were deported to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister perished there. He and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in 1945.

After the war, Elie Wiesel studied in Paris and eventually became a journalist in that city, yet he remained silent about his time in the death camps. During an interview with the French writer François Mauriac, he was persuaded to end that silence and wrote his memoir *Night*. Since its publication in 1956 in Yiddish and in 1958 in French, *Night* has been translated into over thirty languages and millions of copies have been sold. In 2006, Farrar, Straus and Giroux published a new English-language edition of *Night* featuring a new translation by Marion Wiesel; Oprah Winfrey as a selection chose the book for "Oprah's Book Club."

An ardent supporter of Israel, Elie Wiesel was also among the first to defend the causes of Soviet Jews, Nicaragua's Miskito Indians, Argentina's "Disappeared," Cambodia's refugees, the Kurds, South African apartheid victims, famine victims in Africa, the prisoners

in the former Yugoslavia and most recently the cause of victims of genocide in Darfur. Soon after he received the Nobel Peace Prize, Elie Wiesel and his wife Marion established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Its mission, rooted in the memory of the Holocaust, is to combat indifference, intolerance and injustice through international dialogue and youth-focused programs that promote acceptance, understanding and equality. The Foundation runs multiple programs both domestically and internationally.

In the U.S., the Foundation organizes The Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest and bestows The Elie Wiesel Humanitarian Award to a deserving individual. In the U.S. and abroad, the Foundation organizes international conferences for youth in conflict-ridden countries and sponsors its Nobel Initiative Conferences. These conferences, which focus on themes of Peace, Education, Health, the Environment and Terrorism, serve as a way to bring together Nobel Laureates and world leaders to discuss social problems and develop suggestions for change. For the past 4 years, the Foundation has co-hosted the Petra Conferences with His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

In 1992, the Elie Wiesel Foundation began working with Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. It opened the Beit Tzipora Centers for Study & Enrichment, which give Ethiopian Jewish children the opportunity to overcome early educational inequality and participate fully in Israeli society. Named in memory of Elie Wiesel's younger sister, who died in Auschwitz, the Foundation currently has two centers, one in Ashkelon and one in Kiryat Malachi, which enroll close to 1,000 youth. The goal of these programs is to provide Ethiopian immigrants with desperately needed academic tutoring, pre-vocational training, and social and emotional support.

Using the Beit Tzipora Centers as a model, the Foundation started an after-school program in the fall of 2007 for refugees from the genocide in Darfur who have been given safe haven in Israel. The program, operated through the Bialik-Rogozin School in Tel-Aviv, provides after-school English and Hebrew training, computer courses, tutoring, arts and crafts, and counseling to the children. Language classes and other courses, as well as counseling, are also offered to their parents.

Elie Wiesel has served as Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the City University of New York (1972-1976), and the Henry Luce Visiting Scholar in the Humanities and Social Thought at Yale University (1982-1983). Since 1976, he has been the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University where he also holds the title of University Professor. He is a Faculty member in the Departments of Religion and of Philosophy. In 2002, Boston University created The Elie Wiesel Center of Jewish Studies in his honor.

Professor Wiesel has been an American citizen since 1963.

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