

The Unstated Script of the Wiesel Open Letter to President Obama

by William A. Cook / February 18th, 2010

Earlier this month, the Wiesel Foundation for Humanity published, as an advertisement, an open letter to the President of the United States and the leaders of France, Russia, Britain and Germany, a letter carried by the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*. The issue eliciting the need for such a public letter, essentially a letter written to the world, stood boldly as a heading: **“How Long Can We Stand Idly By And Watch The Scandal In Iran Unfold?”**

It occurred to me as I read this piece, signed by a bevy of Nobel Prize winners, that something was missing, some subtext that was not enunciated, some “second prayer” as Mark Twain noted in his satire “The War Prayer,” penned in 1904-5, a second prayer unuttered that accompanies the first. Twain’s satire castigated the government of his day for the needless wars they inflicted on defenseless people as it began America’s quest for empire. He chastised the “sheeples” of his day who drank in the sacred words of their ministers of war who joined the government in its “holy” quest to bring enlightenment to the pagan hordes that lived in distant lands across the seas. That second prayer Twain delivered through an emissary of “the Throne—a message from Almighty God.”

Apparently Elie Wiesel has taken it upon himself to direct the governments of the world in his quest for domination of the mid-east, especially the “cruel and oppressive, irresponsible and senseless, the shameless” regime that dictates the affairs of the Iranian State. Hence the letter:

We the undersigned urgently appeal to you and the other leaders of the world, to use your prestige and power to put an end to this outrage. The situation in Iran is not improving; in fact, it is worsening every day. The cruel and oppressive regime of “Supreme Leader” Ali Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad, whose irresponsible and senseless nuclear ambitions threaten the entire world, continues to wage a shameless war against its own people. Human rights violations have now attained new levels of horror. Thousands of the regime’s political adversaries are being arrested, imprisoned, tortured, raped, and killed, many by hanging...opposition leaders assassinated...human rights activists ... behind bars...indiscriminate firing on unarmed, peaceful demonstrators...and riot tanks in the capital...

What then is the “second prayer,” the subtext that is not enunciated in Wiesel’s plea to the leaders of the world? Could it be part of the Israeli Reut Institute’s directions to the Israeli

government that it launch as big an offensive in PR as it does militarily against the Palestinians to quell the world-wide outrage against the brutality of the Israeli regime a year ago, and continuing in Gaza? Could it be that the “Foundation for Humanity” has been commandeered to partake in the Israeli government’s Public Relations blitz that is currently saturating the European and American theaters? Could this be an attempt to capitalize on the internal unrest in Iran to direct the people of the world away from the oppression and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza? Could this be an enhancement of the efforts of Israel’s Ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, as he travels to various university campuses, most recently at the University of California Irvine, to promote the virtues of the Israeli state that is “existentially” threatened by Iran? Could it be another approach to silence voices of dissent against another illegal invasion of a mid-east nation, comparable to the barrage being levied at Chancellor Michael Drake of UCI by the Zionist Organization of America for allowing free speech to be expressed at the university? Could this letter be anything other than subterfuge, a coating of deception to hide the reality of the real threat that exists in the mid-east, a way to bury under public relations copy the Goldstone Report to the UN that calls upon the world body to bring the alleged war crimes of Israel before the International Court of Justice?

What subtext is not presented to the world through Wiesel’s letter? What happens if we substitute the nation of Israel for the nation of Iran in the text? “The situation in Israel is not improving; in fact, it is worsening every day. The cruel and oppressive regimes of Sharon, Olmert, and now Netanyahu, who maintain an arsenal of nuclear weapons, not just an “ambition” to possess one, threaten the entire world. Human rights violations have now attained new levels of horror with the invasion of Gaza’s defenseless people resulting in the unnecessary slaughter of 1400 civilians and the on-going siege of that imprisoned people for years on end.” What if that letter presented the full picture of Israeli “horror” before the world and asked the simple question, “Why is this tolerated?”

Let’s draw up the bill of particulars that is hidden from the world, the subtext, the unsaid prayer no one in this American government wants revealed and certainly no one in Israel wants displayed publically.

What is the true nature of this state of Israel that commands the allegiance of the American people and is now seeking to enlist the governments of the world against its perceived “existential” enemy, Iran?

- It is a state without mercy, a state without morals, a state premised on racism, a state built on deception and lies;
- a state defiant of international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Conventions that apply to occupying powers;

- a state, unlike North Korea or Iran, the other identified Axis of Evil states, that has invaded neighboring states and occupies them;
- a state, unlike all nations in the Mid-East, that possesses weapons of mass destruction, including hundreds of nuclear weapons, and refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- a state that uses cluster bombs, white phosphorus, and other internationally banned weapons of warfare, not only against the innocent people of Lebanon, but also against the defenseless people of Palestine;
- a state that proclaims itself above the law as it executes individuals without arrest, without charges brought, without counsel, without habeas corpus, and without trial by jury;
- a state that imprisons over 10,000 Palestinians without charge and without due process;
- a state that tortures those it imprisons;
- a state that constructs a wall, in defiance of the International Court of Justice and the United Nations, that encircles the Palestinians with full intention of decimating their economy and hence their livelihood as well as their chance to create a state of their own, while inflicting a psychological humiliation that is inhumane and in defiance of every principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- a state that has systematically confiscated, appropriated, annexed, and assimilated virtually all land belonging to the Palestinians in a sixty-year period of time, leaving them approximately 14 percent of their original land, making it the greatest visible land theft known to human kind in our day;
- a state whose laws protect a group that belongs to a religion and denies equality of citizenship to all others including the indigenous people of the land;
- a state that has defied more than 160 UNGA and 39 UNSC resolutions, demanding it act as a civilized state abiding by international law and protocol;
- a state that will not tolerate interference by the UN in its calculated genocide of the Palestinian people;
- a state that, through its Zionist supporters in America, particularly AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), influences U.S. policy in the Mid-East that has resulted in the unlawful invasion of Iraq and irrational economic and political procedures against Syria and Iran;
- a state that has convinced our Congress that it provide billions of dollars to ensure that the state of Israel continues this genocide of the Palestinian people;
- a state that proclaims itself a democracy but is not and, with malicious intent, confiscates the money belonging to a democratically elected government in Palestine and arrests their representatives without charge or trial;
- a state that proclaims peace but creates conditions that prevent peace;

- a state that, like the United States under Bush, has reached the nadir of the civilized state, a return to lawless barbarism inflicted on the weak by the strong, the imposition of the will of the few on the many;
- and, finally, in all brazen hypocrisy, a state that cries to the world that it is the victim of unspeakable cruelty and in constant peril of obliteration by forces within and without. And we wonder why the United States is castigated throughout the world when it supports this rogue state, this state without mercy.

Great is truth, sayeth the Prophet, and it shall prevail, if not for those now living perhaps for the dead who have suffered the consequence of this deceit; it is to them, “to the dead,” says Voltaire, “we owe only truth.” Thus ends the “second prayer.”

William A. Cook is a Professor of English at the University of La Verne in southern California. He edited The Plight of the Palestinians: A Long History of Destruction (2010). He can be reached at: wcook@laverne.edu.