Elie Wiesel is an active spokesman for peace and human rights all over the world. He has worked on behalf of Soviet Jews and also the State of Israel, and has helped the relatives of “the Disappeared” in Argentina. He has spoken out for victims in Rwanda and Ethiopia, for the Cambodian Boat People, against apartheid in South Africa, in support of peace and human rights in Central America and Kosovo, on behalf of those suffering and at risk in the Darfur region of former Sudan, and, more recently, bringing attention to the political and legal injustice in Russia evidenced by the imprisonment of former Yukos Oil CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Wiesel was 15 years old in 1944 when he and his family were deported from a small village in Transylvania to Auschwitz, where his mother and younger sister perished. Wiesel and his father were later taken to Buchenwald, where his father died before the camp was liberated in 1945. Night, the deeply moving account of his experience during the Holocaust, was written when he could no longer remain silent about what he witnessed as a prisoner in the Nazi death camps, and the memoir has been translated into over thirty languages since its first publication in 1956.

Wiesel’s humanitarian efforts have earned him many honors, including 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, the Queen (2006); and, in 1986, the Nobel Peace Prize. He has written more than fifty books and is the recipient of numerous literary awards and honorary degrees. He became an American citizen in 1963. Soon after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity was established, with the mission of advancing the cause of human rights and peace throughout the world by creating a forum for the discussion of urgent ethical and moral issues confronting humankind.

Professor Wiesel has been the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University since 1976.
Every book has its own [melody]. It’s more than simple rhythm. It’s like a musical key, major or minor, but more so. If you have that key, you know you can go on—the book is there. It’s a matter of time before I begin to know more or less what I want to say: the ideas, the characters, the opinions. But the profound meaning of the book is within me; I still don’t know what it is. And then, suddenly, at the corner of a sentence, an astonishing discovery: this is where I was trying to go.

—Elie Wiesel