

Dear Friends,

When I returned to Israel last Friday from a working trip abroad, I came back to a new reality, to a country that was different from the country I had left just over three weeks earlier.

First of all -- to our friends and brothers in the United States -- our hearts are torn with pain from what we saw for days on end following the horrendous attacks on your cities. Like you, we watched with shock and disbelief the crumbling of the twin towers and the terrible forces of destruction that led to their collapse.

We shared the universal shock and open-mouthed disbelief, the pain and grief of those who stood by helplessly, incapable of stretching out a helping hand.

Sadly, we have amassed experience and pain for many long months of terrorist attacks; during that time we have become accustomed to your strong and supportive shoulder. Now, suddenly, disaster has struck you, and we are not able to help.

Your catastrophe, moreover, proves that the entire world is facing an historic hour; a turning point, confronted by issues it was sure it had long since put behind it. The third world war that had seemed so far away is suddenly at our door, and seemingly there is little we can do. This is not a world war about territory, or about the distribution of resources. This is a religious, fundamentalist war, waged by fanatic extremists who perceive the Muslim world as a sacred entity, while all the rest are heretics and deserve to die.

Dear friends, all we can do now is to join hands and stand fast, alert and fully awake to what lies before us. Now we know that there is no such thing as good or bad terrorism -- those who engage in acts of terrorism will invariably harm the whole world. Now we know, beyond a doubt, that when people in Afghanistan were forced to wear a yellow patch at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the world looked on and did nothing -- the results are the same as they were when yellow patches had to be worn in the previous century, and led to such vast loss and sorrow.

Now we know that the people behind the deaths of so many thousands in the heart of the United States have shown just who they are and where they are heading, and that this is just the beginning of their nefarious deeds. Unless it is prevented ahead of time, the next blow they strike will hurt even more.

The collapse of the tallest buildings in the world also means the crumbling of the high hopes of conducting a dialogue with terrorists and their ilk. They are accountable not only for the destruction of the twin towers, but for the hijacking of dozens of airliners, for bombing attacks on innocent people and killing innocent passengers aboard planes all over the world, for bombing the Jewish community center in Argentina and the killing of hundreds of innocent people at the hands of the Hizballah, aided by Iran; the bombing of a synagogue in Brussels, a synagogue in Turkey, blowing up markets, shopping malls and cars in Tel Aviv, London, Ireland and Moscow, and in many other places all over the world. These incidents are suddenly found to be linked, and clearly these acts of terrorism form one complex and connected network of which we, the people, are the victims every time and everywhere. The world -- even countries that employ bomb and weapon-detecting measures at airfields -- was taken by surprise when the terrorists found ways to circumvent sophisticated technology and were not deterred from striking in every part of the world.

Dear friends and brothers! We must be on the alert constantly, and understand that the battlefields that are approaching concern all of us. We must know that we are fighting back in a battle for justice and human decency, against terror and evil, and we must be ready, now and at all times, to wipe out this evil.

Dear friends, I have just returned from the outside world, and I have seen its regression to the 1930's in its understanding of the situation. I have seen a confused and even frightened world, faced with the well-oiled machinery of religious fundamentalist fanaticism -- an adversary that asks no questions and has all the answers. I found a society of liberal values and human openness, which these others perceive as nothing more than weakness. What is more, I found that these others do not speak our language and although we understand theirs, we have nothing in common with them.

This requires us to be firm and resolute, to preserve and protect our values, our heritage, our humanity, and our faith in our fellowmen.

I came back to Israel, to our small and ancient homeland, and I carry in my heart the decision taken by myself and by my friends of all faiths and origins, that each of us must do something, however modest, for our world, to ensure that tomorrow will be better, to stand up to the harshness of the hatred around us.

Our importance lies in our togetherness, and in our enduring faith in the free and brave new world epitomized for us by America. This will give us the strength to deal with the difficulties that surround us and lie in store.

Yours sincerely,

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