



Elie Wiesel and the Politics of Moral Leadership

Mark Chmiel

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Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel has long opposed the silence of bystanders that allows atrocities like the Holocaust to occur. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, Wiesel has come under criticism for his refusal to speak out about the State of Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people. Mark Chmiel's thoroughly researched and penetrating study is the first book to examine both Wiesel's practice of solidarity with suffering people and his silence before Israeli and American power. Drawing on Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's studies on "worthy and unworthy victims," the author analyzes Wiesel's initiatives of Jewish and universal solidarity with groups ranging from Holocaust survivors and Russian Jews to Vietnamese boat people and Kosovar refugees. Chmiel also critically engages Wiesel's long-standing defense of the State of Israel as well as his confrontations and collaborations with the U.S. government, including the birth of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the 1985 Bitburg affair with President Reagan, and U.S. intervention in the Balkans. Throughout, the author probes the nuances and ambiguities of Wiesel's human rights activism and shows the various uses to which his Holocaust discourse has been put, both in the Middle East conflict and in issues involving U.S. foreign policy. *Elie Wiesel and the Politics of Moral Leadership* provides a provocative view of one of the most acclaimed moralists in recent American history and raises important questions about what it means to be a responsible intellectual in the United States. Author note: Mark Chmiel is Adjunct Professor of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University and Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at Webster University.

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