



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Professor Elie Wiesel to Speak at Public Grand Opening of
Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center**

Esteemed author, activist and Holocaust survivor to join President Bill Clinton, Senator Richard Durbin, Governor Pat Quinn and several thousand guests for opening of new museum

SKOKIE, IL – Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center leadership today announced that Professor Elie Wiesel will be speaking at the institution’s highly anticipated Public Grand Opening on Sunday, April 19, 2009 in Skokie, Illinois. Professor Wiesel will join President Clinton, Senator Richard Durbin, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, foreign dignitaries, Holocaust survivors and several thousand members of the general public for the museum’s formal dedication ceremony.

“Professor Wiesel has dedicated his life to teaching the universal lessons of the Holocaust and to speaking out in defense of human rights” said J.B. Pritzker, the museum’s capital campaign chairman. “The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is dedicated to this very mission and it is a profound honor to have Professor Wiesel with us for our grand opening.”

A survivor of the Holocaust, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and author of more than fifty books, including *Night*—an austere and deeply moving account of his experience during the Holocaust—Professor Wiesel is an active spokesman for peace and human rights all over the world. He has worked on behalf of Soviet Jews and 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, and, more recently, on behalf of those suffering and at risk in the Darfur region of Sudan.

“Elie Wiesel is a tremendous symbol of the survivor community and a global voice in defense of humanity,” said Richard S. Hirschhaut, the museum’s executive director. “We could not be happier to have him join us for the opening.”

The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center’s Public Grand Opening Ceremony is free and open to the public; however, tickets are required and can be requested online at www.ilholocaustmuseum.org. Tickets are limited and must be requested by Monday, April 6, 2009.

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Opening day festivities will commence at 12:00 p.m. under a grand tent outside the museum building, located at 9603 Woods Drive in Skokie, Illinois. In addition to remarks by President Clinton, Professor Wiesel, clergy and elected leaders, the program will include video presentations, a ceremonial lighting of candles by survivors of past and contemporary genocides, musical performances by the Soul Children of Chicago, Miri Ben-Ari and more. Public tours of the building will follow the dedication ceremony beginning at approximately 2:00 p.m. utilizing a timed-ticket entry system. Scheduled times for hourly museum tours will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, upon arrival with a valid ticket. Timed tickets not used will be good for one free afternoon admission to the museum during the month of May, Tuesday – Friday after 1 p.m. and Saturday – Sunday between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Parking for the opening ceremony will be available at an offsite location.

Likely the last international institution of its type to be built with the active participation of Holocaust survivors, the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center will be the largest facility in the Midwest dedicated to preserving the memories of those lost in the Holocaust and to teaching current generations to fight hatred, indifference and genocide in today's world.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is a project of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. Founded by Holocaust survivors nearly 30 years ago, the organization is dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust and the dangers of unchallenged hate. The organization has taught school and community groups through a small storefront museum and speakers' bureau since 1981. To learn more, visit www.ilholocaustmuseum.org.

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