

# *Open Letter to George W. Bush*

## *by Rigoberta Menchu Tum*

**Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Goodwill Ambassador for the Culture of Peace**

To Mr. George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
Washington DC, USA

Your Excellency, Mr. President:

In the first place, I want to reiterate to you the solidarity and condolences I expressed to all your people on Tuesday, September 11 when I became aware of the painful occurrences that had taken place in your country, as well as to share my indignation and condemnation of the threats these acts of terrorism constitute.

In recent days I have been following the evolution of events, using my best efforts so that the response to them would be reflection, not obsession; prudence, not rage; and the pursuit of justice, not revenge. I invoked the consciousness of the world's peoples, the communication's media, the eminent personalities with whom I share an ethical commitment to peace, the heads of state and leaders of international bodies, in order that prudence illuminate our acts.

Nevertheless, Mr. President, upon listening to the message you gave to the Congress of your country, I have been unable to overcome a sensation of fear for what may come of your words. You call upon your people to prepare for "a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen" and for your soldiers to save their honour by marching to a war in which you intend to involve all of us, the peoples of the world.

In the name of progress, pluralism, tolerance and liberty, you leave no choice for those of us who are not fortunate enough to share this sensation of liberty and the benefits of the civilization you wish to defend for your people. We, who never had sympathy for terrorism since we were its victims; we, who are proud expressions of other civilizations, who live day to day with the hope of turning discrimination and plunder into recognition and respect, who carry in our souls the pain of the genocide perpetrated against our peoples; finally, we, who are fed up with providing the dead for wars that are not ours — we cannot share the arrogance of your infallibility nor the single road onto which you want to push us when you declare that, "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."

At the beginning of this year, I invited the men and women of the planet to adopt a *Code of Ethics for a Millennium of Peace* sustaining that:

**There will be no Peace if there is no Justice.**

**There will be no Justice if there is no Equity.**

**There will be no Equity if there is no Progress.**

**There will be no Progress if there is no Democracy.**

**There will be no Democracy if there is no respect for the Identity and Dignity of the Peoples and Cultures.**

In today's world, all these values and practices are scarce; nevertheless, the unequal manner in which they are distributed does nothing but generate impotence, hopelessness and hatred. The role of your country in the present world order is far from being neutral. Last night, we hoped for a sensible, reflective and self-critical message but what we heard was an unacceptable threat. I agree with you that "the course of this conflict is not known", but when you declare that "its outcome is certain", the only certainty that comes to me is that of a new and gigantic useless sacrifice, of a new and colossal lie.

Before you cry "fire", I would like to invite you to consider a different kind of world leadership, one in which it is necessary to convince rather than to defeat; in which humanity is able to demonstrate that, in the last thousand years, we have surpassed the meaning of "an eye for an eye", by which justice, the barbarians sank humanity into medieval obscurantism; in which there is no need for new crusades in order to learn to respect those who have a different conception of God and the work of His creation; and in which we would share in solidarity the fruits of progress, taking better care of the resources still remaining in the planet and that no child lack bread and a school.

With hope hanging by a thread, I greet you attentively,

*Rigoberta Menchu Tum*

September 23, 2001