



Rudy Giuliani

Address to the United Nations General Assembly Session on Terrorism



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Thank you, President of the General Assembly, Dr. Han Seung-Soo, and Secretary General, Annan. And thank you very much for the opportunity to speak, and also for the consideration you showed the City in putting off your General Session. And as I explained to the Secretary General and the President of the General Assembly, we are now open, and we're ready, and at any time we can arrange it, we look forward to having your heads of state and your foreign ministers here for that session.

On September 11th 2001, New York City -- the most diverse City in the world -- was viciously attacked in an unprovoked act of war. More than five thousand innocent men, women, and children of every race, religion, and ethnicity are lost. Among these were people from 80 different nations. To their representatives here today, I offer my condolences to you as well on behalf of all New Yorkers who share this loss with you. This was the deadliest terrorist attack in history. It claimed more lives than Pearl Harbor or D-Day.

This was not just an attack on the City of New York or on the United States of America. It was an attack on the very idea of a free, inclusive, and civil society. It was a direct assault on the founding principles of the United Nations itself. The Preamble to the U.N. Charter states that this organization exists "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person...to practice tolerance and live together in peace as good neighbors...[and] to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security."

Indeed this vicious attack places in jeopardy the whole purpose of the United Nations. Terrorism is based on the persistent and deliberate violation of fundamental human rights.



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With bullets and bombs, and now with hijacked airplanes, terrorists deny the dignity of human life. Terrorism preys particularly on cultures and communities that practice openness and tolerance. Their targeting of innocent civilians mocks the efforts of those who seek to live together in peace as neighbors. It defies the very notion of being a neighbor.

This massive attack was intended to break our spirit. It has not done that. It's made us stronger, more determined, and more resolved. The bravery of our firefighters, our police officers, our emergency workers, and civilians we may never learn of, in saving over 25,000 lives that day, and carrying out the most effective rescue operation in our history, inspires all of us.

I'm very honored to have with me as their representatives, the fire commissioner of New York City, Tom Von Essen. Tom, please stand up.

And the police commissioner of New York City, Bernard Kerik.

The determination, resolve, and leadership of President George W. Bush has unified America and all decent men and women around the world. And the response of many of your nations, your leaders and people, spontaneously demonstrating in the days after the attack, your support for New York and America, and your understanding of what needs to be done to remove the threat of terrorism, gives us great, great hope that we will prevail.

The strength of America's response -- please understand -- flows from the principles upon which we stand. Americans are not a single ethnic group. Americans are not of one race or one religion. Our belief in religious freedom, political freedom, economic freedom -- that's what makes an American. Our belief in democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human life -- that's how you become an American.

It's these very principles and the opportunities these principles give to so many to create a better life for themselves and their families that make America and New York a shining city on a hill. There's no nation in the history of the world and no city that has seen more immigrants in less time than America. And people continue to come here in large, large numbers to seek freedom, opportunity, decency, civility.

Each of your nations, I'm certain, has contributed citizens to the United States and to New York. I believe I can take every one of you someplace in New York City, and you can find someone from your country, someone from your village or town, that speaks your language and practices your religion. In each of your lands, there are many who are Americans in spirit by virtue of their commitment to our shared principles.

It's tragic and perverse that it's because of these very principles, particularly our religious, political, and economic freedoms, that we find ourselves under attack by terrorists. Our freedom threatens them, because they know if our ideas of freedom gain a foothold among their people, it will destroy their power. So they strike out against us to keep those ideas from reaching their people.



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The best long-term deterrent and approach to terrorism, obviously, is the spread of the principles of freedom and democracy and the rule of law and respect for human life. The more that spreads around the globe, the safer we will all be. These are very, very powerful ideas. And once they gain a foothold, they cannot be stopped.

In fact, the rise that we've seen in terrorism and terrorist groups, I believe, is in no small measure a response to the spread of these ideas, freedom and democracy, to many nations, particularly over the past 15 years. The terrorists have no ideas or ideals with which to combat freedom and democracy. So their only defense is to strike out against innocent civilians, destroying human life in massive numbers and hoping to deter all of us from our pursuit and expansion of freedom.

But the long-term deterrent of spreading our ideals throughout the world is just not enough -- and may never be realized -- if we do not act, and act together, to remove the clear and present danger posed by terrorism and terrorists. The United Nations must hold accountable any country that supports or condones terrorism. Otherwise, you will fail in your primary mission as peacekeeper. It must ostracize any nation that supports terrorism. It must isolate any nation that remains neutral in the fight against terrorism.

Now is the time in the words of your charter, the United Nations Charter, "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security." This is not a time for further study or vague directives. The evidence of terrorism's brutality and inhumanity, of its contempt for life and the concept of peace is lying beneath the rubble of the World Trade Center, less than two miles from where we meet today. Look at that destruction, that massive, senseless, cruel loss of human life, and then I ask you to look in your hearts and recognize that there is no room for neutrality on the issue of terrorism: You're either with civilization or with terrorists.

On one side is democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human life; on the other, it's tyranny, arbitrary executions, and mass murder. We're right and they're wrong. It's as simple as that. And by that I mean that America and its allies are right about democracy, about religious, political, and economic freedom. And the terrorists are wrong and, in fact, evil in their mass destruction of human life in the name of addressing alleged injustices.

Let those who say that we must understand the reasons for terrorism, come with me to the thousands of funerals we're having in New York City -- thousands -- and explain those insane maniacal reasons to the children who will grow up without fathers and mothers and to the parents who have had their children ripped from them for no reason at all. Instead, I ask each of you to allow me to say at those funerals that your nation stands with America in making a solemn promise and pledge that we will achieve unconditional victory over terrorism and terrorists.

There's no excuse for mass murder, just as there's no excuse for genocide. Those who practice terrorism, murdering or victimizing innocent civilians, lose any right to have their cause understood by decent people and lawful nations. On this issue, terrorism, the United Nations must draw a line.



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The era of moral relativism between those who practice or condone terrorism and those nations who stand up against it must end. Moral relativism doesn't have a place in this discussion and debate. There's no moral way to sympathize with grossly immoral actions. And by so doing and by trying to do that, unfortunately, a fertile field has been created in which terrorism has grown.

The best and most practical way to promote peace is to stand up to terror and intimidation. The Security Council's unanimous passage of Resolution 1373 adopting wide-ranging antiterrorism measures into the international community is a very good first step. It's necessary to establish accountability for the subsidizing of terrorism.

As a former United States Attorney, I am particularly encouraged that the United Nations has answered President Bush's call to cut terrorists off from their money and their funding. It's enormously important. We've done that successfully with organized crime groups in America. By taking away their ability to mass large amounts of money, you take away their ability to have others carry on their functioning for them even if they're removed, arrested, prosecuted, or eliminated through war or through law enforcement. It cuts off the life blood of the organization. So I believe this was a very good first step.

But now it's up to the Member states to enforce this and other aspects of the resolution, and for the United Nations to enforce these new mechanisms to take the financial base away from the terrorists. Take away their money, take away their access to money and you reduce their ability to carry out complex missions.

Each of you sitting in this room is here because of your country's commitment to being part of the family of nations. We need to unite now -- as a family -- as never before, across all of our differences in recognition of the fact that the United Nations stands for the proposition that human beings have more in common than divide us.

If you need to be reminded of this, you don't need to look very far. Just go outside for a walk in the streets and the parks of New York City. You can't walk a block or two blocks in New York City without seeing somebody that looks different than you, acts different than you, talks different than you, believes different than you. If you grow up in New York City you learn that and then you learn something -- if you're an intelligent or decent person -- you learn that all those differences are nothing in comparison to the things that unite us. We're a city of immigrants unlike any other city -- within a nation of immigrants. Like the victims of the World Trade Center attack, we're of every race; we're of every religion; we're of every ethnicity; and our diversity has been our greatest source of strength. It's the thing that renews us and revives us in every generation, our openness to new people from all over the world.

So from the first day of this attack -- an attack on New York, on America and, I believe, on the basic principles that underlie this organization -- I've told the people of New York that we should not allow this to divide us, because then we would really lose what this city is all about.



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We have a very, very strong and vibrant Muslim and Arab communities in New York City. They are an equally important part of the life of our city. We respect their religious beliefs. We respect everyone's religious beliefs. That's what America is about. That's what New York City is all about.

I've urged New Yorkers not to engage in any form of group blame or group hatred. This is exactly the evil that we're confronting with these terrorists. And if we're going to prevail over them, over terror, then our ideals and principles and values must transcend all forms of prejudice. This is a very important part of the struggle against terrorism.

This is not a dispute between religions or ethnic groups. All religions, all decent people are united in their desire to achieve peace and understand that we have to eliminate terrorism. We're not divided about this. There have been many days in New York, when I was running for mayor, and since I've been mayor, there were many times when I would have a weekend in which I would go to a Mosque on a Friday and a synagogue on a Saturday and a church, sometimes two churches, on a Sunday. And by the time I finished, I would say to myself, "I know that we're getting through to God." We're talking to Him in every language that He understands. We're using every liturgy that exists, and I know we're getting through to the same God. We may be doing it in slightly different ways. God is known by many different names and many different traditions, but identified by one consistent feeling: love -- love for humanity, particularly love for our children. Love does eventually conquer hate. I believe that. I'm sure you do.

But it also needs our help. Good intentions alone are not enough to conquer evil. Remember British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain who, armed only with good intentions, negotiated with the Nazis and emerged hopeful that he had achieved peace in his time. Hitler's wave of terror was only encouraged by these attempts at appeasement. At the cost of millions of lives, we've learned that words alone, although important, are not enough to guarantee peace. It is action alone that counts. For the United Nations, and individual nations, decisive action is needed to stop terrorism from ever orphaning another child.

That's for nations. For individuals, the most effective course of action they can take to aid our recovery is to be determined to go ahead with their lives. We can't let terrorists change the way we live. Otherwise, they will have succeeded. In some ways, the resilience of life in New York City is the ultimate sign of defiance to terrorists. We call ourselves the capital of the world in large part because we're the most diverse city in the world. And we're the home of the United Nations. So that spirit of unity, amid all our diversity, has never, ever been stronger.

On Saturday night, I walked through Times Square. It was crowded; it was bright; it was lively. Thousands of people were visiting from all parts of the United States and all parts of the world. And many of them came up to me and they shook my hand and patted me on the back and said, "We're here because we want to show our support for the city of New York."



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And that's why there's never been a better time to come to New York City. I say to people across the country and around the world: If you were planning to come to New York sometime in the future, come here now. Come to enjoy our thousands of restaurants, the museums and sporting events and shopping and Broadway; but also come to take a stand against terrorism.

We need to heed the words of a hymn that I and the police commissioner and the fire commissioner have heard over and over again at the many funerals and memorial services that we've gone to in the last week, two weeks. The hymn begins: "Be not afraid."¹ Freedom from fear is a basic human right. We need to reassert our right to live free from fear with greater confidence and determination than ever before. Here in New York City, across America and around the world, with one clear voice, unanimously, we need to say, "We will not give in to terrorism."

Surrounded by our friends of every faith, we know this is not a clash of civilizations. It's a conflict between murderers and humanity. This is not a question of retaliation or revenge. It's a matter of justice leading to peace. The only acceptable result is the complete and total eradication of terrorism.

New Yorkers are strong and they are resilient.

We are unified and we will not yield to terror.

We do not let fear make our decisions for us.

We choose to live in freedom.

Thank you and God bless you.