

INTRODUCTION

What is our human obligation? This is a pressing question, now more than ever. Thousands of people are displaced every day, and too few people are turning their attention to this crisis. As a child of refugees, I easily see that history is repeating itself. In the current refugee crisis the same stories my parents told of their property being seized, their possessions stolen and destroyed, and their loved ones forcibly uprooted are reemerging. The tragedies they endured are faced by millions of people around the globe at this very moment.

Ai Weiwei, a former refugee himself, shares this sentiment and is helping to keep the collective voice of the refugees at the forefront of art and politics. Humanity illustrates Ai Weiwei's thinking on a journey through twenty-three

countries confronting and documenting the realities of the current global refugee crisis. Selected from a variety of sources, including interviews, magazine features, and podcasts from numerous countries, these quotations reflect the diversity within Ai Weiwei's voice. As he speaks to a range of audiences, his words are expressed through many tones to illustrate the complexity of the crisis. Above all, he brings awareness to these human rights issues in light of an atmosphere of indifference in which those with the power to act have failed to do so. He calls not only on governments and authorities, but on individuals. No action is too small and no action is too late.

This appeal comes at an urgent moment. As 2018 begins, over sixty-five million people have been displaced worldwide, with many countries adopting truly disheartening exclusionary policies in response. Ai Weiwei's unwavering focus

on this humanitarian crisis reflects the hope that art joined with political dialogue can lead to greater consciousness, support, and healing among human beings.

I stand with Ai Weiwei and his belief that every human being deserves the same aspirations: to make the most of the lives we are given, to infuse our world with meaning and sensitivity, and to confront the obstacles facing us. To fulfill these aspirations, we are called upon to use our own individual power to aid those whose power has been stripped from them. We must resist complacency and indifference, and strive to bring immediate and sustained attention to this crisis on a global scale. It is our collective responsibility to inspire the world with freedom, empowerment, creative expression, and determination. This is our obligation.

LARRY WARSH