

The starving refugee lying in the hot dust of the Sahel can scarcely summon the strength to help himself, let alone strike out at us. If his children survive, they will remember us, and with fury in their hearts, you can be sure. But that is a threat for another time. It does not frighten us into action today.

If the more powerful countries are to summon the will to respond in a more effective way, and with greater unity, to the problems of a chaotic world, it will be because of two things: first, a decision to give practical application to the human values which we in the West say we hold in common; and second, a better understanding of the less noble-sounding but no less compelling imperative of our own self-interest.

What are these values that we hold in common? Surely the most basic is freedom, the freedom of individuals and of nations, the political freedom which distinguishes East from West, the freedom of the market system upon which our economies are based. The freedom of which I speak is not an abstract concept divorced from our daily lives, or reserved for patriotic speeches on national holidays; it is the very foundation and life-giving spirit of the societies which we have built in the various countries of the West.

Within our own borders we have long realized that there can be no freedom for some without freedom for all. An assault against the basic rights of my neighbour inevitably places in jeopardy my own rights, my own security and freedom. We have little trouble accepting the truth and the implications of that statement, within our own borders.

We have more trouble in giving a modern answer to the very old question: Who is my neighbour? Is she the woman rummaging for food in the back streets of an Asian shanty town? Is he the man in South America, in prison for leading a trade union? The people dying in Africa for lack of medical care, or clean water, are they my neighbours? Or those who are dying in the spirit in the villages of India for lack of a job, or an education, or hope? Are my neighbours the children running from the sound of gunfire in the streets of Beirut?