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NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR HONORS HUMANITARIAN ELIE WIESEL AT ORDER OF ST. ANDREW ARCHONS BANQUET

Calling him "one of the greatest humanitarians of our time," Gov. Christie Whitman tonight helped honor Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel at the Annual Order of St. Andrew Archons Banquet in New York. Wiesel was the recipient of the Archbishop Athenagoras Humanitarian Award.

"Professor Wiesel's work on behalf of human rights has earned him universal esteem as the 'conscience of the world,'" the Governor said. "His message of peace reminds us that we will be judged above all by what we have done to make the world a better place."

"This message was echoed in the wisdom of His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew. At the World Economic Forum in Switzerland earlier this month, he called for a 'form of globalization that proclaims that all human beings of every race and language and all cultures should be united by bonds of love, brotherhood and cooperation,'" Gov. Whitman said.

"I often speak of New Jersey as Many Faces, One Family. We all deserve respect. We all have something to contribute, no matter what our background or life's experience. Tonight's honorees epitomize all that I try to convey with that slogan," she said. "Professor Wiesel, you ensure that the voices silenced a half-century ago continue to be heard."

Gov. Whitman said Archbishop Spyridon, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, and Archons of the Order of St. Andrew defend not only the Patriarchal Throne in Constantinople, but also "help insure greater religious freedom for all people."

"It is all of our responsibility to promote an environment that embraces diversity and respect for the individual," she said. "If even one person is denied his or her fundamental human rights, humanity as a whole suffers."

"As we gather together to celebrate the life of a man whose life is synonymous with these principles, let us rededicate ourselves to the cause of religious freedom. Let us continue to work for respect and understanding among all faiths," the Governor said.

A native of Sighet, Transylvania (Romania), Wiesel and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz when he was 15. His mother and younger sister died at Auschwitz; his father died at Buchenwald. Following the war, Wiesel studied in Paris and became a journalist in that city. Wiesel has published more than 40

books, including his memoir *La Nuit* (The Night). Since its publication in 1958, *La Nuit* has been translated into 25 languages and has sold millions of copies.

Wiesel has served as chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, founding chairman of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Council, and founding president of the Paris-based Universal Academy of Cultures.

Currently, he is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, where he also holds the title of University Professor. He is a member of the religion and philosophy departments. Previously, he taught at the City University of New York and Yale University.

Wiesel's awards include the Nobel Peace Prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom, U. S. Congressional Gold Medal, Medal of Liberty Award, the rank of Grand Officer in the French Legion of Honor, and more than 90 honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning.

Past recipients of the Archbishop Athenagoras Humanitarian Award, given by the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, have included Mother Theresa and former President Jimmy Carter.