

Mohamed El Bachiri's statement for the Launch of the

Exhibition

Surviving Terrorism: Victims' Voices

Friday, 17 August 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Mohamed El Bachiri. I am a Belgian-Moroccan, and I live in Molenbeek. I lost my wife in the terrorist attacks of 22 March 2016 in Brussels, when a bomb exploded in the subway.

A vile and cowardly attack which took away the love of my life, and left our 3 children without a mother.

This was the work of bloodthirsty and hate-filled criminals who attempted to find justification for their appalling acts in the law of God.

A God of hatred, destruction and madness, far removed from the God of love, mercy and reason in which I believe, and in which the majority of Muslims believe.

Since these events, my life has been turned upside down. Despite the presence of my family and friends, a feeling of loneliness pervades my life, and I have not returned to my job as a subway driver.

In my anguish, several days after losing my wife, I felt the need to write. To write down my pain, my sorrow, my sadness, but also my love for Loubna, my children, life and humanity. This process was vital for me, and my words are now in a book entitled "A jihad of love". This book has sold over 100,000 copies in the Netherlands, and was published in four languages, namely French, English, German and Dutch.

The book is an ode, a manifesto for love towards everything around us, for respect and tolerance, for the defence of universal and humanist values, and for the fight against all forms of extremism and fanaticism. It is also an invitation, an initiation to philosophy, as it prompts questioning and reflection in the simplest way. Because I believe that it is by stimulating a critical mindset, based on strong ethics and values, that we will be able to effectively stamp out this disease called terrorism.

I also believe that the heads of state and governments of powerful and democratic countries should adopt a policy of empathy, goodwill and respect for human life, towards all citizens of the world, beyond geopolitical boundaries.

Humanism, which is a fraternal bond between all human beings, free will and the sanctity of human life, should be the basis and universal principle for the world we pass on to our children.

Let us all be proselytes of love, whatever our origin, culture, faith, and be driven by love in our quest for peace and harmony.

With a very special thought for my princess, Loubna Lafquiri.

Thank you.