The Aladdin Project and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs are organizing a series of literary evenings in ten cities between January 26 and the first week of February 2010 dedicated to one of the classics of the twentieth century, “If This Is a Man” (or “Survival in Auschwitz”) by Primo Levi. In Cairo, Rabat, Casablanca, Istanbul, Amman, Tunis, Baghdad, Irbil, Nazareth and Jerusalem, the major testimony of a survivor of Auschwitz will be presented in its Arabic or Turkish translation and discussed in the historical context of the Holocaust. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution in November 2005 proclaiming January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the International Day of commemoration of victims of the Holocaust.
The Aladdin Project

The Aladdin Project is a Paris-based nongovernmental organization that brings together intellectuals and personalities from different religions and cultures to promote intercultural dialogue and wage a common struggle against Holocaust denial and conflicts of memory through the dissemination of knowledge. Its president is Anne-Marie Revcolevschi.

Several platforms for dissemination of knowledge have already been established:
- www.projetaladin.com
- www.aladdinlibrary.com

offering the first ever translations into Arabic and Persian of several classics on the Holocaust.

The Aladdin Project was officially launched on March 27, 2009 under the patronage of UNESCO at a conference attended by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Mr Jacques Chirac, Mrs. Simone Veil and many Ambassadors from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, South America and Europe. The Heads of State of France, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey, Bahrain, Spain and Bosnia sent high-level representatives to declare their support for the Aladdin Project. The conference received considerable media coverage, particularly in the Arab and Muslim world. Since then, more than 1,000 personalities worldwide have declared their support for this initiative, half of them from Arab and Muslim countries. Internet users have downloaded thousands of copies of books from the Aladdin Online Library and the multilingual website receives thousands of visits every week, particularly from the Muslim world.

The strength of the Aladdin Project lies in its ability to implement concrete initiatives in areas such as education and dissemination of knowledge by means adapted to different cultures. What enables us to achieve this is our broad-based network of experts, academics and civil society actors and the use of new communication technologies.

Aladdin’s Board of Directors brings together an array of talented personalities from France and the Muslim world, while other eminent personalities such as Professor M’hamed Hassin Fantar of Tunisia, Dr Mustafa Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Mr Bruno Racine, director of the National Library of France, Mr Hedi Baccouche, former Prime Minister of Tunisia, Mr Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam, Mrs Hele Beji, president of the International College of Tunis, and Mr Abduljalil Sajid, Mufti of the Pakistani community in Britain, have agreed to join the Committee on Conscience.

The Patrons of the Aladdin Project:

- Mr Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal
- Mr. Jacques Chirac, former President of France
- Princess Haya Al-Khalifa of Bahrain
- Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan
- Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, former President of Indonesia (recently deceased)
- Mr. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, former President of Mauritania
- Mr Gerhard Schröder, former Chancellor of Germany
A Call to Conscience

“A Call to Conscience” is the declaration of principles of the Aladdin Project. It was signed by President Abdoulaye Wade, Mr. Jacques Chirac, and Mrs. Simone Veil at Aladdin’s launch conference on behalf of all the participants. Since then, hundreds of intellectuals and public figures from around the world have added their signatures.

While each one of the cities where the events are held will have its specific features, the general program is as follows:

Word of welcome by the Chief of Mission or a representative of the French diplomatic mission

Presentation of the Aladdin Project and screening of a short film of its launch conference at UNESCO

An expose of the historical context of the Holocaust by a historian

An Introduction to Primo Levi and his works by a literary expert

Readings of excerpts from “If This Is a Man”

Screening of a film clip of William Karel on Primo Levi

Debate

Summary and Conclusion

We, women and men in public life, historians, intellectuals and people from all faiths, have come together to declare that the defence of values of justice and fraternity must overwhelm all obstacles to prevail over intolerance, racism and conflict.

With every passing day, we witness a rising tide of hatred and violence filling the gulf of misunderstanding.

This particularly affects the current relations between Muslims and Jews, while for centuries - in Persia, throughout the Middle East, in North Africa and across the Ottoman Empire - they lived together often in harmony.

We say clearly that the Israelis and the Palestinians have a right to their own state, their own sovereignty and security and that any peace process with such aims must be supported.

In the face of ignorance, prejudice and competing memories that we reject, we believe in the power of knowledge and the primacy of History.

We therefore affirm, beyond all political considerations, our determination to defend historical truth, for no peace is built on lies. The Holocaust is a historical fact; the genocide in which six million European Jews were exterminated.

Its scope is universal, for it was the values of dignity and respect for human beings that Nazi Germany and its European accomplices sought to destroy. To deny this crime against humanity is not only an insult to the memory of the victims, but also an insult to the very idea of civilization. Hence, we believe that the teaching of this tragedy concerns all those who have at heart the will to prevent further genocides. The same requirement of truth calls on us to recall the actions of the Righteous in Europe and in the Arab and Muslim world.

Together, we declare our common desire to promote a sincere dialogue, open and fraternal.

It is in this spirit that we have gathered around the Aladdin Project. We call on all men and women of conscience around the world to work with us in this common endeavour of shared knowledge, mutual respect and peace.
Primo Levi was born to a Jewish Italian family in Turin on July 31, 1919. He is one of the best known survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. A chemist by profession, Primo Levi testifies about his eleven months of detention, from February 26, 1944 to January 27, 1945, in the concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz, most of which he spent in Auschwitz III-Buna Monowitz. His most famous book, "If This Is a Man" (Se Questo è un Uomo), published first in 1947, then in 1958, is considered one of the most important works of the twentieth century. Primo Levi also wrote many books belonging to different literary genres, from poetry to novels and essays. In 1966, he adapted "If This Is a Man" for theatre. Primo Levi ended his life on April 11, 1987.

"If This Is a Man"

Primo Levi’s book is the shocking story of the author’s captivity in Auschwitz. Originally published by a small Italian publishing house, it took ten years for the book to be recognized worldwide as a masterpiece: 500,000 copies have been sold in Italy alone. Levi became a major literary figure in Italy during his lifetime. His books have been translated into several languages and one of them, “The Truce” has been taught in Italian schools. Levi’s works provide clear and overwhelming evidence of life in Nazi camps. Despite the horror and the violence he suffered, Levi describes the terrible events in an objective manner; as a scientific observer, but he also notes with compassion the heroism of some of his companions in the midst of their suffering.
READING PRIMO LEVI
in Cairo, in Rabat, in Casablanca,
in Istanbul, in Tunis, in Baghdad, in Irbil,
in Amman, in Nazareth and in Jerusalem