

The Elders visit to the Middle East – 25-28 August

21 August 2009

The Elders – a group of eminent global leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela – will arrive in Israel on Monday 24 August, and will begin their itinerary on Tuesday morning. Further schedule details will follow.

The Elders' delegation will be led by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and will also include Ela Bhatt, Gro Brundtland, Jimmy Carter, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu. They will be joined by business leaders Richard Branson and Jeff Skoll who, with others, helped to establish The Elders' organisation and continue to support their work.

The Elders arrive in the Middle East amid important efforts to restart peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians - and they fully support these efforts. However the Elders also emphasise that they are playing no role in the diplomatic process, nor do they seek to do so.

The focus of their visit will be to support all those working for peace and to listen to the concerns of those on both sides who are affected by the conflict. The Elders recognize that people have been disappointed by failure to secure a lasting agreement in the past and although the majority of Israelis and Palestinians want peace, and agree on a two-state solution, experience has made them skeptical that agreement can be reached.

Without the support of the people, no peace process can succeed. The Elders hope that by meeting a wide range of Israelis and Palestinians including young people, independent experts, members of civil society, business people and activists, they can encourage greater connection between the people and the political process.

An important part of the Elders communication efforts will be a daily blog, recording their individual impressions and encounters. These will be available with videos and photos on the Elders website. On Friday 28 August, a live Jerusalem-Tel-Aviv-Ramallah conversation between the Elders and a number of the people they have met will be streamed from Jerusalem via their website. The event is also available to broadcasters.

During their time in the region, The Elders will be based in Jerusalem and will visit a number of sites in Israel as well as the West Bank.

An important priority for the Elders is to highlight the situation in Gaza and to call for an end to the blockade. Regrettably, due to the current dynamic security situation, their visit to Gaza has been postponed until The Elders' next visit to the region, which will take place as soon as their agendas allow.

About The Elders

The Elders are an independent group of eminent global leaders who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity.

Based on an initiative by Richard Branson and Peter Gabriel, Nelson Mandela announced the formation of The Elders in Johannesburg on his 89th birthday in 2007.

The Elders are Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson, Desmond Tutu (Chair) and Muhammad Yunus.

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