

The Elders: US veto of UN resolution on Israeli settlements is deeply regrettable

Desmond Tutu: Middle East peace process must be restarted along new, fairer lines

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The decision of the United States to veto a UN resolution condemning continuing Israeli settlement building in the occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply regrettable.

With its vote in the Security Council on Friday, the United States chose to ignore previous agreements, UN resolutions and principles of human rights and international law. Its action stands in contrast to growing calls for freedom, justice and basic human rights echoing today around the Middle East and Maghreb region.

If there is one clear lesson that has emerged from the ongoing protests in the region, it is that the double standards and exceptionalism that have been applied to the Middle East for too long must be discarded.

The US has defended its decision to stand alone in the Security Council against all the other 14 members on the grounds that the resolution would not facilitate a return to direct negotiations between the parties – and thus, by implication, realisation of the two-state solution. The Elders strongly believe that the overwhelming weight of evidence points to the opposite conclusion. Only a principled stance by the entire international community is likely to bring about a just and secure peace for all Israelis and Palestinians.

Over the past two decades the peace process has generated few results and now appears to be in serious difficulty. Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have steadily expanded over the same period.

The right of the state of Israel to exist is not in dispute and the Elders condemn those who seek to delegitimise it. Tragically though, Israel is becoming increasingly isolated in the world community.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said: “The US decision to veto a UN resolution that largely restated Washington’s own policy on the illegitimacy of Israeli settlement building is scandalous. It seems that when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States is not prepared to apply principles of human rights and respect for international law. With a heavy heart I have to conclude that this decision will do nothing to further a peace process that must urgently be restarted along new, fairer lines.”

ABOUT THE ELDERS

The Elders are an independent group of eminent global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace-building and help address major causes of human suffering.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

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