

The Elders welcome UN recognition of Palestine as an observer state

“The UN vote can be a catalyst for genuine negotiations between Israel and Palestine on a more equal footing” – Jimmy Carter

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders congratulate the Palestinian people on reaching a significant milestone today in their long quest for statehood. In granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer state, by a clear majority, the United Nations General Assembly has displayed a bold act of international leadership.

The Elders believe that the UN vote will help to safeguard the [two-state solution](#) and serve to enhance prospects for future negotiations and peace in the region.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said:

“We wholeheartedly welcome the recognition of Palestine as an observer state by the United Nations. Sixty-five years after the UN recommended the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state side by side on former Mandatory Palestine, the world has finally taken an important step on the Palestinian part of its promise.”

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

“Once the dust has settled, this will be seen as an historic vote in favour of peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis. It was also a vote for human rights and the rule of law. We congratulate President Mahmoud Abbas for pursuing this diplomatic, peaceful route towards the globally-agreed objective of Palestinian statehood, one that is fully in line with UN resolutions and international law.”

The Elders urge all parties to refrain from taking punitive measures against the Palestinians for pursuing their legitimate UN bid and hope Palestinians and Israelis will put aside cynicism and see the UN vote as a step forward for their mutual goals of peace, security and national sovereignty.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, said:

“The recognition of Palestine as a state by the General Assembly has the potential to change the current dynamic in the Middle East. It is a reaffirmation that the two-state solution remains the only long-term path to peace between Palestinians and Israelis, at a time when

the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements is taking us ever closer to a one-state outcome.”

Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States, said:

“The international community now has a duty to turn this significant step by the UN into lasting peace in the Middle East. It should encourage Fatah and Hamas to reconcile their differences and work together for Palestinian unity. World powers and concerned regional states should not overlook the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to other tensions in the world. The UN vote can be a catalyst for genuine negotiations between Israel and Palestine on a more equal footing.”

Read more about The Elders' work on Middle East peace

<http://www.theelders.org/middle-east-peace>

- OP-ED: ["Two state solution on the line"](#) by Gro Harlem Brundtland and Jimmy Carter, International Herald Tribune, 25 November 2012
- STATEMENT: ["The Elders call for immediate halt to Gaza violence,"](#) 16 November 2012

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About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Kofi Annan](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) (Chair). [Nelson Mandela](#) is an honorary Elder.

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