

Former President of Brazil Fernando Cardoso: peace is possible

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders' delegation currently visiting Israel was honoured today to meet the spiritual leader of the Shas Party, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

The Elders met privately with the Rabbi at his home in Jerusalem. Those attending the meeting were Ela Bhatt, Gro Brundtland, Jimmy Carter, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu.

Delegation leader, former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso said after the meeting:

“We came to pay our respects to the eminent Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who is such an important spiritual leader in this country and to Jewish people around the world. Our conversation was very positive – we share the Rabbi's insistence on the necessity of peace.”

Earlier this morning, The Elders met a small group of young Israelis at Beith Yehudit cultural center in Emek Refaim, Jerusalem. The group came from a range of backgrounds - orthodox, secular, Arab-Israeli, politically active, non-political and business. A common theme among the speakers was the lack of openness within Israeli society and the apathy of what they called the 'silent majority' who have relinquished the consequences of the current political debate to others.

The Elders encouraged the participants to find ways to stay active and mobilise their communities to effect positive change.

In a statement immediately before the meeting, the first public statement of the visit, delegation leader Fernando Cardoso said the Elders fully support current peace efforts in the region. "We are very supportive of current efforts to reopen negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians – and hope very much that this will happen. We also recognise that people have lost hope in the political process. We want to say to people here - peace is possible - and we will support their efforts in any way we can."

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