

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; champion of international justice and multilateralism; outspoken advocate for peace and human rights; veteran Jordanian diplomat and peacekeeping expert.

- Ambassador of Jordan to the United States, 2007-2010
- Permanent Representative of Jordan to the UN, 2000-2007 & 2010-2014
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2014-2018
- A central figure in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, 2002-2009
- Joined The Elders, 2019
- Appointed President and CEO of the International Peace Institute (IPI), 2021

“In an age when poor leadership, injustice and suffering is rife, The Elders’ vision of a world where people live in peace and are conscious of their common humanity is essential. “

- Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

Work with The Elders

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein joined The Elders in January 2019 after stepping down from his role as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights the previous year.

Since joining The Elders, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has continued to be an outspoken advocate for human rights in all its shapes and forms. In April 2019, he travelled with The Elders to Ethiopia, participating in meetings with senior officials, including the Prime Minister and President of Ethiopia, and visited a refugee camp in Gambela.

Furthermore, Mr Al Hussein is a globally recognised voice of justice, international law and peace-making and frequently speaks about these issues on high-level events, particularly on the need for a multilateral response to shared challenges, including the treatment of refugees, climate justice and in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein became United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2014. He stepped down after completing one full four-year term, citing his unwillingness to “bend the knee in supplication” as reason for not seeking a second term.

During his term he was outspoken on several prominent human rights abuses and criticised the regimes who perpetrated them, including the war in Syria, the treatment of Rohingya refugees

and the travel ban in the United States. He showed strength in his willingness to call out the powerful by name.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein frequently speaks out against populism, xenophobia and extremism – wherever it occurred. He has criticised the treatment of refugees in Europe and abuse of use of force by police in the US – and emphasised that the human rights agenda applies to all countries.

Establishing the International Criminal Court

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein played a central role in the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), chairing the complex negotiations surrounding the elements of individual offences amounting to genocide; crimes against humanity; and war crimes.

In September 2002, Mr Al Hussein was elected the first President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC. Over the next three years he oversaw the election of the first 18 judges, mediated selection of the Court's first president, and led efforts to name the Court's first prosecutor.

Subsequently, in 2009, he successfully led the closing stages of the negotiations over the crime of aggression specifically with respect to its legal definition and the conditions for the court's exercise of jurisdiction over it.

Veteran diplomat and peacekeeping expert

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has previously held several diplomatic posts including as Jordan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and Ambassador to the United States of America. In 2014, he was President of the UN Security Council and chaired the Security Council's committees on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. He also served as a UN political affairs officer in the former Yugoslavia, from 1994 to 1996.

In 2004, following allegations of widespread abuse being committed by UN peacekeepers, Mr Al Hussein was named Advisor to the Secretary-General on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. His report provided a comprehensive strategy for the elimination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping operations, and has been called "revolutionary" by experts. In 2012, he was chosen by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as one of five experts to serve on his "Senior Advisory Group" regarding reimbursements to countries contributing peacekeeping troops.