

The Elders call for Marwan Barghouti's release to spur moves to two-state solution

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The Elders today call for the immediate release of Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti from Israeli prison, as an important step towards reviving a lasting two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We encourage President Trump to demand his release, capitalising on the opportunity opened up by the fragile ceasefire deal in Gaza.

The ceasefire has offered some relief to the population of Gaza but the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. We condemn Israel's latest attacks on Gaza City as a flagrant violation of the deal. Much more pressure is still needed on Israel to end the deliberate obstruction of aid.

The ceasefire deal is only the first step towards a lasting two-state solution. This will require an Israeli government willing to support it, as well as the revitalisation of political life across the occupied Palestinian territory to ensure Palestinian voices are heard at all levels.

Marwan Barghouti has been a long-term advocate for a two-state solution by peaceful means, and is consistently the most popular Palestinian leader in opinion polls. But Israel has so far refused to release Barghouti as part of President Trump's deal.

We condemn the ill-treatment, including torture, of Marwan Barghouti and other Palestinian prisoners, many of whom are arbitrarily detained. Israeli authorities must abide by their responsibilities under international law to protect prisoners' human rights.

Only the Palestinian people have the right to choose their own leadership. We welcome the commitment by President Mahmoud Abbas to hold free and fair elections under international auspices within the next twelve months to rejuvenate Palestinian governance.

Many Palestinians refer to Marwan Barghouti as "their Mandela". He has a vital role to play as a unifying figure, whose reputation as a supporter of a two-state solution has grown over his 23 years of imprisonment. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the founding Chair of The Elders, first called

for his release in 2013. Freeing him now would send a signal that Israel is serious about pursuing a peaceful, political path to resolve the conflict.

Many Israeli political and security figures, including a former director of the Shin Bet internal security agency, support his release and recognise the leadership role he could play in the interests of peace, dignity and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Marwan Barghouti was convicted in 2004 in a trial that the Inter-Parliamentary Union found contained numerous breaches of international law and was not fair. Barghouti has supported the right of Palestinians to resist Israel's illegal occupation, but condemned attacks on civilians.

President Trump and other leaders with influence should do all they can to secure Barghouti's release. They should seize this moment to increase the chances of lasting peace, security and accountability in the region.

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The Elders are independent global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

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[Ban Ki-moon](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#) and [Muhammad Yunus](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Desmond Tutu](#) (1931-2021) and [Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) were founding members of The Elders and served as Chairs from 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to 2018 respectively. [Ela Bhatt](#) (1933-2022) and [Martti Ahtisaari](#) (1937 - 2023) were members of The Elders from 2007 to 2016 and 2009 to 2018 respectively. [Jimmy Carter](#) (1924-2024) was also a founding member of The Elders.

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