

OPEN LETTER ON RECOGNITION OF PALESTINE FROM THE ELDERS

President Emmanuel Macron
French Republic

Prime Minister Keir Starmer
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Prime Minister Mark Carney
Canada

Juan Manuel Santos (Chair)
Ban Ki-moon
Lakhdar Brahimi, *Elder Emeritus*
Gro Harlem Brundtland
Fernando H. Cardoso, *Elder Emeritus*
Helen Clark
Elbegdorj Tsakhia
Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein
Hina Jilani
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Ricardo Lagos, *Elder Emeritus*
Graça Machel
Denis Mukwege
Mary Robinson
Muhammad Yunus, *Elder Emeritus*
Ernesto Zedillo

6 June 2025

Dear President Macron, Prime Minister Carney and Prime Minister Starmer

We urge you to recognise the State of Palestine now as an essential, transformative step towards peace.

We welcome your joint statement of 19 May, in which you committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to achieving a two-state solution. It is time to make good on that commitment at next week's conference hosted by France and Saudi Arabia in New York.

Since the Elders were founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007, we have consistently called for a durable two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Only such a solution can permanently end Israel's unlawful occupation and allow both peoples to live side by side in peace and security.

Recognition of the State of Palestine is the beginning, not the end, of a political pathway towards a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Recognition should not be linked to negotiations between the conflict parties. Israel does not have the right to veto Palestinian self-determination or statehood.

Nor should recognition be linked to governance reform, or the form that a sovereign, unified Palestinian state will take. These are separate issues from statehood itself.

The question of when and how Hamas should disarm or be disarmed will ultimately need to be addressed as part of a lasting political settlement that provides mutual security for both Palestinians and Israelis.

The case for Palestinian statehood stands above such questions. It is a matter of principle, of justice, and of demonstrating a real commitment to a two-state solution based on the right to self-determination for both peoples.

Your three countries joining the 147 UN member states that have already recognised Palestine will contribute to a political horizon and a measure of parity between the parties. Both are urgently needed in a conflict defined by the asymmetry between the State of Israel and a stateless Palestinian people living under unlawful occupation.

Like you, we want to see Israel living in peace and security based on mutual recognition with Palestine as well as with other Arab states and beyond. But pursuing normalisation of relations between Israel and Arab states without ending Israel's occupation and realising a fully sovereign Palestinian state will sow the seeds of future conflict.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's government is openly stating its intent to prevent a Palestinian state. It is accelerating its annexation of the West Bank, mostly recently by approving 22 new illegal settlements. At this dangerous moment, your recognition of the State of Palestine would send a clear signal that the goal of a "Greater Israel" will never be accepted by the international community. We urge you to stand with the many Israelis who understand that their own security depends on the security and self-determination of Palestinians, and who oppose their current government's strategy.

Recognition of Palestine alone will not end the terrible human suffering of Palestinians in Gaza or resolve the conflict. For recognition to be transformative, it must be accompanied by "concrete actions" as promised in your 19 May statement.

These actions must address the impunity enjoyed by the current Government of Israel, and compel a change of course by those on both sides of the conflict who obstruct the pathway to peace. They should start with targeted sanctions against the Israeli leaders responsible for the policies of starvation as a weapon of war, mass displacement and indiscriminate military attacks in Gaza, as well as illegal settlement expansion and annexation in the West Bank.

An immediate ceasefire in Gaza and full humanitarian access for UN agencies remain imperative. We have consistently condemned Hamas for its attacks on Israeli civilians and the unlawful detention of Israeli hostages, all of whom should be released unconditionally, as should all arbitrarily detained Palestinians.

These are desperate and distressing times that demand decisive action and moral courage. We are counting on your leadership, so that progress can be made towards a lasting peace, and mutual security for Palestinians and Israelis alike.



Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia, Nobel Peace Laureate and Chair of The Elders



Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of The Elders



Graça Machel, Founder of the Graça Machel Trust, Co-founder and Deputy Chair of The Elders



Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the WHO



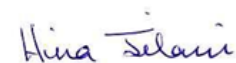
Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former head of the UN Development Programme



Elbegdorj Tsakhia, former President and Prime Minister of Mongolia



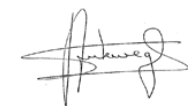
Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights



Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and co-chair of the Taskforce on Justice



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate



Denis Mukwege, physician and human rights advocate, Nobel Peace Laureate



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



Ernesto Zedillo, former President of Mexico