



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Elders Mission to Middle East

With a deep concern about the long-standing conflict in the Middle East and an equally strong wish for peace, The Elders are sending a three-person team on a mission to the region. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States who negotiated the Camp David Agreement, and Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, will visit Israel, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia from April 13-21 to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the interlocking Middle Eastern conflicts.

The Elders will listen to all parties in the countries. They will meet with leaders from governments, civil society, and key groups that influence the conflict, in an attempt to understand their various perspectives. At the end of the mission, the Elders will prepare a report for the public to help people understand the urgency of peace and what is needed to secure it. The Elders will also meet and begin to work with groups that will reinforce the efforts by the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to negotiate a peace agreement based on a two-state solution.

Each of the Elders brings a unique perspective and considerable knowledge and experience in the region or in conflicts that share some characteristics with those in the Middle East. “As Secretary General of the United Nations, I was acutely sensitive to the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in the mind of many in the Middle East,” said Kofi Annan. “I have just completed an intense and grueling negotiation in Kenya and learned that conflict is easier than peace, but persistence makes peace possible.”

As a former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson said: “For decades we sought ways to contribute to peace in Northern Ireland,” said Mary Robinson. “In the end, we took risks to bring those who espoused violence into the political process. Many thought it was impossible, but it worked.”

“One of the greatest rewards of my life was to help Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Anwar Sadat reach agreement for peace at Camp David,” said Jimmy Carter. “But one of the great frustrations since then has been the failure to achieve a comprehensive peace. We genuinely hope that our efforts to learn from each of the parties could contribute to peace.”

Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Chair of the Elders commented, “In South Africa, we sometimes feared that we could never attain peace or democracy, but it happened, and we would like to see our good fortune replicated in the Middle East.”

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Note to Editors

The Elders, a group of twelve leaders from throughout the world, were convened by Nelson Mandela in July 2007 on the occasion of his 89th birthday, to contribute their wisdom, independent leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's toughest problems. The Elders' first mission was to Sudan in September and October 2007. For their report and other information on the Elders, visit www.theElders.org

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