

The Elders to visit Middle East 16-22 October

Mary Robinson to lead Elders' delegation of Lakhdar Brahimi, Ela Bhatt and Jimmy Carter.

The Elders will visit Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories in support of "a just and secure peace for all."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders, a group of eminent global leaders founded by Nelson Mandela, will make their second collective visit to the Middle East from 16–22 October 2010.

The aim of their visit is to encourage support across the region for the current final status negotiations, with emphasis on the need to reach a just and secure peace for all; one that embraces human rights principles under international law, while also ensuring the security and safety of Israelis and Palestinians.

They will begin their trip in Cairo, and will also visit Syria, Jordan, Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories. Further details of their visit, including press conferences, will be announced shortly.

The Elders' delegation leader, former Irish President Mary Robinson said:

"The Elders firmly support current efforts to reach a two-state solution, although we want to emphasise that we are not directly involved in the US-led mediation efforts. Our aim will be to listen to a wide range of people about their aspirations for peace, including those who are currently at the margins of the process.

"We will also be seeking to persuade political leaders, members of civil society and the media that any peace agreement must ensure the safety and security of Israelis and Palestinians, and embrace fundamental principles of international law, including human rights. These concepts – justice, security, and inclusiveness – will be at the heart of our discussions in the region."

Lakhdar Brahimi, former UN envoy said:

"Israel must end the occupation if it is ever to achieve peace with its neighbours. It must end all settlement activity and uphold the right of Palestinians to live in dignity and freedom in their

own land.

“At the same time, Palestinians deserve a unified leadership that can deliver a just and secure peace for the people. We will also visit Egypt, Syria and Jordan because peace can be achieved only in a comprehensive context. Everyone has a role and a responsibility to help achieve peace in the region. It is up to all of us.”

India's Ela Bhatt, a Gandhian advocate of non-violence and a pioneer in the field of women's economic empowerment, said:

“I will be pleased to return to the Middle East to show the Elders' support for all those engaged in creative, non-violent resistance to the occupation – both Israelis and Palestinians.

“I look forward to encouraging women to lead peaceful efforts to build their communities for stable peace. Women will bring constructive, creative and sustainable solutions to the world. I have faith in your feminine way of transformation of the world to live together in peace. Violence has never solved any problem, anywhere, as we all know.”

Former US President Jimmy Carter said:

““The people of the Holy Land deserve peace and they yearn for it. Yet there are those who persist in depriving the majority of a solution by continued settlement activity, deliberate efforts to change the Palestinian identity of East Jerusalem and the deteriorating situation in Gaza.

“As Elders, we will listen to groups that are alienated from the peace process including Palestinian citizens of Israel, young people and Hamas. In visiting a number of regional capitals, we also want to learn from leaders in those countries about the obstacles and opportunities they see ahead.”

About The Elders

The Elders are an independent group of global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace- building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

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For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to www.theElders.org

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