

Zeid Raad Al Hussein

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

- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2014-2018
- Multilateral diplomat
- Central figure in the establishment of the International Criminal Court
- Outspoken advocate for human rights, justice and peace

“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. “

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 criticized 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 frequently spoke out against populism, xenophobia and extremism – wherever it occurred. He criticized the treatment of refugees in Europe and abuse of use of force by police in the US – emphasizing that the human rights agenda applies to all countries.

He also lent his support to young activists and human rights lawyers around the world, speaking out as a champion for grassroots activism.

Establishing the ICC

Zeid played a central role in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, chairing the complex negotiations surrounding the elements of individual offences amounting to genocide; crimes against humanity; and war crimes.

In September 2002, Zeid was elected the first President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. 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 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 Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia.

Zeid's knowledge of peacekeeping is extensive. He 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, he 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, Zeid was chosen by 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.