

# Towards a Comprehensive Settlement of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

With the Middle East immersed in its worst crisis for years, we call for urgent international action towards a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Everyone has lost in this conflict except the extremists throughout the world who prosper on the rage that it continues to provoke. Every passing day undermines prospects for a peaceful, enduring solution. As long as the conflict lasts, it will generate instability and violence in the region and beyond.

The outlines of what is needed are well known, based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973, the Camp David peace accords of 1978, the Clinton Parameters of 2000, the Arab League Initiative of 2002, and the Roadmap proposed in 2003 by the Quartet (UN, US, EU and Russia). The goal must be security and full recognition to the state of Israel within internationally recognized borders, an end to the occupation for the Palestinian people in a viable independent, sovereign state, and the return of lost land to Syria.

We believe the time has come for a new international conference, ideally held as soon as possible and attended by all relevant players, at which all the elements of a comprehensive peace agreement would be mapped, and momentum generated for detailed negotiations.

Whether or not such an early conference can be convened, there are crucial steps that can and should be taken by the key players, including:

- Support for a Palestinian national unity government, with an end to the political and financial boycott of the Palestinian Authority.
- Talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, mediated by the Quartet and reinforced by the participation of the Arab League and key regional countries, on rapidly enhancing mutual security and allowing revival of the Palestinian economy.
- Talks between the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli government, sponsored by a reinforced Quartet, on the core political issues that stand in the way of achieving a final status agreement.
- Parallel talks of the reinforced Quartet with Israel, Syria and Lebanon, to discuss the foundations on which Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese agreements can be reached.

Nobody underestimates the intractability of the underlying issues or the intensity of feelings they provoke. But if the Arab-Israeli conflict, with all its terrible consequences, is ever to be resolved, there is a desperate need for fresh thinking and the injection of new political will. The times demand no less.

**Morton Abramowitz**  
Former US Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to Turkey and Thailand

**Adnan Abu-Odeh**  
Former Political Adviser to King Abdullah II and King Hussein, Jordan

**Esko Aho**  
Former Prime Minister, Finland

**Ali Alatas**  
Former Foreign Minister, Indonesia

**Abdul-Kareem Al-Eryani**  
Former Prime Minister, Yemen

**Raúl Alfonsín**  
Former President, Argentina

**Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon**  
Former UN High Representative for Bosnia & Herzegovina

**Lloyd Axworthy**  
Former Foreign Minister, Canada

**Peter Barry**  
Former Foreign Minister, Ireland

**Shlomo Ben-Ami**  
Former Foreign Minister, Israel

**Alexander Bessmertnykh**  
Former Foreign Minister, Soviet Union

**Carl Bildt**  
Former Prime Minister, Sweden

**Valdis Birkavs**  
Former Prime Minister, Latvia

**James Bolger**  
Former Prime Minister, New Zealand

**Kjell Magne Bondevik**  
Former Prime Minister, Norway

**Boutros Boutros-Ghali**  
Former Secretary-General, UN

**Lakhdar Brahimi**  
Former Foreign Minister, Algeria, and UN Special Representative

**Gro Harlem Brundtland**  
Former Prime Minister, Norway

**Zbigniew Brzezinski**  
Former National Security Advisor to the President, United States

**Kim Campbell**  
Former Prime Minister, Canada; Secretary General, Club of Madrid

**Ingvar Carlsson**  
Former Prime Minister, Sweden

**Frank Carlucci**  
Former Secretary of Defense, United States

**Jimmy Carter**  
39th President, United States; Nobel Peace Prize 2002

**Maria Livanos Cattau**  
Former Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce

**Naresh Chandra**  
Former Indian Cabinet Secretary and Ambassador to US

**Claude Cheysson**  
Former Foreign Minister, France

**Jean Chrétien**  
Former Prime Minister, Canada

**Wesley Clark**  
Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

**Gerard Collins**  
Former Foreign Minister, Ireland

**Pat Cox**  
Former President, European Parliament

**Jacques Delors**  
Former President, European Commission

**Gianni De Michelis**  
Former Foreign Minister, Italy

**Ruth Dreifuss**  
Former President, Switzerland

**Roland Dumas**  
Former Foreign Minister, France

**Shirin Ebadi**  
Nobel Peace Prize 2003; Iran

**Uffe Ellemann-Jensen**  
Former Foreign Minister, Denmark

**Gareth Evans**  
President, International Crisis Group; Former Foreign Minister, Australia

**Mark Eyskens**  
Former Prime Minister, Belgium

**José María Figueres**  
Former President, Costa Rica

**Vigdís Finnbogadóttir**  
Former President, Iceland

**Joschka Fischer**  
Former Foreign Minister, Germany

**Malcolm Fraser**  
Former Prime Minister, Australia

**Anil K Gayan**  
Former Foreign Minister, Mauritius

**Leslie H Gelb**  
President Emeritus, Council on Foreign Relations, US

**Bronisław Geremek**  
Former Foreign Minister, Poland

**Kiro Gligorov**  
Former President, Macedonia

**Richard Goldstone**  
Former Prosecutor, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

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**Mikhail S Gorbachev**  
Former President, Soviet Union; Nobel Peace Prize 1990

**I K Gujral**  
Former Prime Minister, India

**Tenzin Gyatso**  
14th Dalai Lama; Nobel Peace Prize 1989

**Vahit M Halefoğlu**  
Former Foreign Minister, Turkey

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Former Congressman, United States; Director, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

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Former Prime Minister, Australia

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**John Hume**  
Nobel Peace Prize 1998; Northern Ireland

**Lord Hurd of Westwell**  
Former Foreign Secretary, UK

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Former Deputy Prime Minister, Malaysia

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Former Foreign Minister, Jordan

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Founder, Médecins Sans Frontières; Former Minister, France, and UN Special Representative

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Former President, Chile

**Zlatko Lagumdžija**  
Former Prime Minister, Bosnia & Herzegovina

**Anthony Lake**  
Former National Security Advisor to the President, United States

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Former Prime Minister, Republic of Korea

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Former Prime Minister, UK

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Former Secretary of Defense, United States

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**Najib Mikati**  
Former Prime Minister, Lebanon

**Mike Moore**  
Former Prime Minister, New Zealand; Former Director-General, WTO

**Marwan Muasher**  
Former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Jordan

**Klaus Naumann**  
Former Chairman, North Atlantic Military Committee of NATO, Germany

**Boyko Neov**  
Former Minister of Defence, Bulgaria

**Ayo Obe**  
Chair, World Movement for Democracy, Nigeria

**Sadako Ogata**  
Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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Former Foreign Secretary, UK

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Co-Chair, International Crisis Group; Former US Ambassador to the UN, Russia, India, Israel, Jordan, El Salvador and Nigeria

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Former President, Portugal

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Former Chair, Africa & Asia Subcommittees, US Congress

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Former President, International Committee of the Red Cross

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Chairman, Open Society Institute

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Former Foreign Minister, Finland

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**HRH El Hassan bin Talal**  
Founder, Arab Thought Forum, Jordan

**Leo Tindemans**  
Former Prime Minister, Belgium

**Alex S Trigona**  
Former Foreign Minister, Malta

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Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town; Nobel Peace Prize 1984

**Cassam Uteem**  
Former President, Mauritius

**Hans van den Broek**  
Former Foreign Minister, Netherlands, and European Commissioner for External Relations

**Ed van Thijn**  
Former Minister and Mayor of Amsterdam, Netherlands

**George Vassiliou**  
Former President, Cyprus

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