

The Robben Island Declaration

for the freedom of Marwan Barghouthi and all Palestinian political prisoners

We, the signatories, affirm our conviction that freedom and dignity are the essence of civilization. People around the globe, and throughout history, have risen to defend their freedom and dignity against colonial rule, oppression, segregation and apartheid. Generations of men and women have made great sacrifices to forge universal values, uphold fundamental freedoms and advance international law and human rights. There is no greater risk to our civilization than to relinquish these principles and to allow for their breach and denial without accountability.

The Palestinian people have been struggling for decades for justice and the realisation of their inalienable rights. These rights have been repeatedly reaffirmed by countless United Nations resolutions. Universal values, international legality and human rights cannot stop at borders, nor admit double standards, and must be applied in Palestine. This is the way forward to a just and lasting peace in the region, for the benefit of all its peoples.

The realisation of these rights entails the release of Marwan Barghouthi and all Palestinian political prisoners whose ongoing captivity is a reflection of the decades-long deprivation of freedom that the Palestinian people have, and continues, to endure. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been imprisoned at some point in their lives¹, in one of the most striking examples of mass detention aiming at destroying the national and social fabric of the occupied people, and to break its will to achieve freedom. Thousands of Palestinian political prisoners still languish today in Israeli jails. Some Palestinian prisoners have spent over 30 years in Israeli prisons, making Israel, the Occupying power, responsible for the longest periods of political detention in recent history.

The treatment of Palestinian prisoners, from the moment of their arrest, during interrogation and trial, if one is held, and during their detention, violates the norms and standards prescribed by international law. These violations, including the absence of the most fundamental guarantees of a fair trial, the use of arbitrary detention, the ill-treatment of the prisoners, including the use of torture, the disregard for children rights, the lack of health care for sick prisoners, the transfer of prisoners into the territory of the Occupying State and the violations of the right to receive visits, as well as the arrest of elected representatives, require our attention and intervention.

Among these prisoners, a name has emerged, both nationally and internationally, as central for unity, freedom and peace. Marwan Barghouthi has spent a total of nearly two decades of his life

1 These include 800 000 Palestinians having experienced imprisonment since 1967, according to the data made available by the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees and ex-detainees.

in Israeli prisons, including the last 11 years. He is the most prominent and renowned Palestinian political prisoner, a symbol of the Palestinian people's quest for freedom, a uniting figure and an advocate of peace based on international law. As international efforts led to the release of Nelson Mandela and of all the anti-apartheid prisoners, we believe that the international community must help to secure the freedom of Marwan Barghouti and all Palestinian prisoners, as an integral part of its moral, legal and political responsibility to assist the Palestinian people in the realization of their rights.

We therefore call, and pledge to act, for the release of Marwan Barghouti and all Palestinian prisoners. Until their release, the rights of the Palestinian prisoners, as enshrined in international humanitarian law and human rights law, must be upheld, and the arrest campaigns must cease.

One of the most important indicators of the readiness to make peace with your adversary is the release of all political prisoners, a powerful signal of the recognition of a people's rights and just demands for freedom. It is the marker of a new era, where freedom will pave the way to peace. Occupation and peace are incompatible. Occupation, in all its manifestations, must end, so that freedom and dignity can prevail. Freedom must prevail for the conflict to end and for the peoples of the region to live in peace and security.

**International High Level Committee
for the Freedom of Marwan Barghout
and all Palestinian prisoners**

Bios

Ahmed Kathrada (Founder)

Ahmed Mohamed Kathrada started his life long activism at the age of 13. He was one of the leaders of the non-racial, anti-apartheid struggle. Alongside Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, he spent almost three decades in prison for opposing the apartheid government and mobilising support of ordinary individuals to pursue a just and democratic South Africa. Prior to his imprisonment, he launched the Release Mandela Campaign. Mr Kathrada spent 18 of his 26 years in prison, on Robben Island. He is a retired member of Parliament, and served as President Mandela's Parliamentary Counsellor during Mandela's term of office. He is the founder of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation.

Theo Ben-Gurirab

Former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Namibia and current Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia. He was elected as President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for a three-year mandate in October 2008. Since October 2011, he is Honorary President of the IPU. During his 35 years in the field of international affairs and diplomacy, notably in the UN, he served as President of the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. He was instrumental in driving the UN reform process forward and presided over the drafting of the historic United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000.

John Bruton

John Bruton is a former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland and was actively engaged in peace negotiations in Northern Ireland. He was former European Union Ambassador to the United States. He was first elected to the Irish Parliament in 1969 and served there until 2004.

Angela Davis

Angela Y. Davis is known internationally for her ongoing work to combat all forms of oppression in the U.S. and abroad. Over the years she has been active as a student, teacher, writer, scholar, and activist/organizer. She is a living witness to the historical struggles of the contemporary era. In 1970 she was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List on false charges, and was the subject of an intense police search that drove her underground and culminated in one of the most famous trials in recent U.S. history. During her sixteen-month incarceration, a massive international "Free Angela Davis" campaign was organized, leading to her acquittal in 1972. Professor Davis's pursues today her long-standing commitment to prisoners' rights in the USA and worldwide. Today she is Distinguished Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies Departments at the University of California,

Santa Cruz. In 1994, she was appointed to the University of California Presidential Chair in African American and Feminist Studies.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel

A well-known artist, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel gave up teaching and devoted his time to building nonviolent movements for change in Latin America during dictatorship. He was named secretary-general of Servicio Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice Service or SERPAJ) a group that coordinates non-violent movements in the region. Because of his work for human rights across Latin America, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel became a target of the military dictatorship. In 1977, he himself was “disappeared” and was imprisoned and tortured by the Argentinean military for 14 months. He was released after being named Amnesty International’s Political Prisoner of the Year in 1978. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for his leadership for human rights and true democracy for the people of Latin America. Upon his release, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel continued his work leading SERPAJ.

Stéphane Hessel (dec.) & Christiane Hessel

Stéphane Hessel was a resitant against nazi regime, a diplomat and Ambassador of France, writer and human rights icon. A tireless defender of international law, he became Honorary President of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine. His book *Indignez vous!* became a global best seller and a source of inspiration for an entire generation seeking political and social justice.

His wife Christian Hessel is active internationally for human rights, notably children rights.

Lena Hjelm-Wallén

Lena Hjelm-Wallen, is the former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. She held several other ministerial positions and was a Member of Parliament until 2002. She was chairperson of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2002-2009). She was also President of Olof Palme International Center (2003-2013).

Jose Ramos-Horta

Jose Ramos-Horta was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. He served in several senior positions in Timor-Leste, including as Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense and Prime Minister before being elected President. He is the author/co-author of books, frequent contributor to major newspapers. He is currently a UN Special Envoy.

Mairead Corrigan Maguire

Mairead Corrigan Maguire was awarded the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize for her extraordinary actions to help end the deep ethnic/political conflict in her native Northern Ireland. She shares the award with Betty Williams. Since receiving the award, Mairead has dedicated her life to promoting disarmament and peace, both in Northern Ireland and around the world.

U Win Tin

Co-founder with Aung San Suu Kyi of the National League for democracy, he spent two decades in Burmese jails. Journalist, author and poet, U Win Tin was awarded the UNESCO World Press Freedom Prize for his efforts to defend and promote freedom of expression in Burma. That year, he was also awarded the World Association of Newspapers' Golden Pen of Freedom Award.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Anglican priest Desmond Mpilo Tutu was the first black General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches and Anglican bishop of Johannesburg. He called for equal rights for all South Africans. He encouraged nonviolent resistance to the apartheid regime, and advocated an economic boycott of the country. The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate was elected Archbishop of Cape Town. He was later appointed as Chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission by then President Nelson Mandela, to investigate apartheid-era crimes. Archbishop Tutu is regarded as an elder world statesman with a major role to play in reconciliation and as a leading moral voice.

Jody Williams

Jody Williams received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her work as founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines , which shared the Peace Prize with her that year. Since 2006, Ms. Williams has chaired the Nobel Women's Initiative. The Initiative uses the prestige of the Nobel Peace Prize and the combined influence of the sister Peace Prize laureates to support efforts of women around the world working for sustainable peace, justice and equality .