



IN MEMORIAM
Shimon Peres
1923 - 2016



The Socialist International expresses its great sadness at the passing of Shimon Peres, former Israeli president, prime minister and foreign minister, former leader of the Israel Labour Party (ILP), and a leading figure within the SI as both a vice-president and honorary president of the organisation, who died on Tuesday 27 September at the age of 93. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues.

Peres was one of the founders of the state of Israel in 1948, and would go on to be one of the most significant statesmen in its history. He was active in public life for seventy years, including nearly half a century serving as a member of the Knesset, following his election as a member of the SI-member Mapai in 1959. He finally relinquished his seat in the Israeli parliament in 2007, upon his election as president of Israel. He led the ILP, successor to Mapai and member of the SI, on three occasions, from 1977-1992, 1995-1997 and 2003-2005. Shimon Peres served twice as prime minister and on three separate occasions as foreign minister of Israel, in addition to holding various other ministries during his illustrious career. His many achievements included those during the period between 1992 and 1995, when he played a vital role as foreign minister in the government of Yitzhak Rabin with respect to the Israel-Palestine peace process, leading to the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993. These contributions were recognised in 1994 when Peres was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Rabin and Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian National Authority, for their efforts to create peace in the Middle East.

His second term as prime minister of Israel began in tragedy, following the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995. Speaking at the XX SI Congress held at the United Nations headquarters in New York one year later, Peres paid tribute to Rabin and underlined the continued importance of progress towards peace with Palestine and the need for Israel to make peace with Syria and Lebanon. On these issues Peres was a regular and active participant in the work of the SI, always prepared to engage in dialogue with his Palestinian counterparts within the framework of our common political family. He was also for many years a member of the SI Presidium as a vice-president, and was an honorary president of the organisation from 1999-2003.

Peres's commitment to a peaceful future for both Israelis and Palestinians was epitomised in the work of the Peres Centre for Peace, which he founded in 1996 with a mission to promote lasting peace by creating an environment of tolerance and cooperation. At the time of his 90th birthday in 2013, Peres expressed his conviction that his ambition of peace for Israel and Palestine would be achieved within his lifetime, and it is deeply regrettable that so little recent progress has been made in this regard.

As leaders in both Israel and Palestine are joined by voices from around the world in paying tribute to a man who dedicated so much of his life to peace, the Socialist International urges both sides to return to negotiations for a lasting resolution to the conflict. Reaching peace and security in a two state solution is not only a necessity for the future stability and prosperity of Israel, Palestine and the Middle East, but would also be the realisation of the vision and hopes of the peacemaker Shimon Peres.

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