

A WORLD IN MOTION



ISSUE 158 | 3 OCTOBER 2016

P1 | ISRAEL

Prominent Israeli politician and Nobel Prize winner Shimon Peres, seen as a 'man of peace' by some and a 'war criminal' by others, has died.

P2 | UNITED NATIONS

The annual UN General Assembly meeting on critical world issues was overshadowed by a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction with the body's effectiveness.

P3 | SOUTH AFRICA

As part of the 'Fees Must Fall' movement, students protesting for free education are clashing with police/security at several campuses.

P4 | PROJECTS

Project Future Hope supports six Christian teachers at a Christian school in a North African country.



THE NUMBERS: SHIMON PERES



1959

The year in which Peres was first elected to the Israeli parliament (Knesset) -leading to 5 decades of public service



2

The number of Muslim nations with which Peres negotiated peace agreements for Israel



13.07.2007

The date when Peres addressed the Turkish parliament—the first Israeli president in history to speak to a Muslim country's legislature



1994

The year in which Peres was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

ISRAEL'S FORMER PM PERES LAID TO REST



Shimon Peres, the world-renowned Israeli politician, statesman, and Nobel Prize winner whose career spanned and shaped his country's history, died in hospital (on 28 September), aged 93. Mr Peres, who served as Israel's eighth prime minister and ninth president, had been fighting for his life since suffering a major stroke and bleeding in his brain two weeks ago while in hospital for a check-up. Mr Peres was the most prominent remaining political figure from the generation who led and built Israel from its founding in 1948. Outside Israel, he was arguably the best-known living Israeli public figure. Bill Clinton, the former US president, described him as 'a global treasure' at his 90th birthday celebration in Jerusalem in 2013. (*Financial Times*)

The question of peace

Praised by the West for his diplomatic achievements in bringing Israel and Palestine closer to peace, and having won the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in shaping and implementing the 'Oslo Accords' (a set of agreements between the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation) in 1993, Shimon Peres has left a lasting legacy. This legacy is now in the hands of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, despite increased pressure from the West, continues to build settlements within disputed Palestinian areas, further frustrating and aggravating Palestinians to the point where daily confrontations between the Israeli military and Palestinian civilians turn violent, even deadly.

As the era of the 'old guard' comes to an end, the question of peace remains unanswered as world

leaders shy away from making any attempt at bringing Israel and Palestine together. US President Barack Obama, in his first address as president at the UN General Assembly in 2009, said he would make negotiating peace between Israelis and Palestinians a primary objective of his presidency, but sadly, as every US president before him, he was unable to achieve this. And now, with the last of the 'successful' negotiators having passed away, hope for lasting peace remains as elusive as ever.

Arab perspective

Although Mr Peres was lauded as a hero and one of the last 'founding fathers' of the state of Israel, Daoud Kuttab (*Jordan Times* columnist) says he will be remembered by many Arab Palestinians as someone "talking about the appearances of peace, rather than its reality". *Jerusalem Post* expands on this idea: "Media coverage of his death in the Arab world generally depicts him as anything but a peacemaker, linking him to the 1948 Nakba or catastrophe of Palestinian displacement, highlighting the 1996 shelling of a UN compound at Qana in southern Lebanon, where refugees were seeking shelter, that took place under his watch as prime minister, stressing his role in the building of the Dimona nuclear reactor and dismissing him as someone who spoke a lot about peace but did little to achieve it."

Some negative Arab sentiment towards Mr Peres goes even further, with Saudi-owned *Al-Hayat* newspaper quoting Fatin Farhat (described as a 'known cultural personality' in Ramallah): "It's regrettable that Peres and Sharon [another former Israeli Prime Minister] died before they could be tried for war crimes, regrettable and unjust."

Al-Hayat suggests that Mr Peres' death is a possible powder keg waiting to explode: "Any expression of sadness would stir up the anger of the Palestinian street, while ignoring the death would bring negative political reactions and be used by the Israeli government against the Palestinian leadership."

NEWS HEADLINES



A widow of a naval commander killed during the 9/11 terror attacks in the US has become the first person to sue Saudi Arabia for supporting Al-Qaeda's attacks. Stephanie Ross DeSimone's claim came two days after the US Congress overwhelmingly voted to waive President Obama's veto of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (Jasta). Obama opposed Jasta, saying it will set a precedent that could open the US to being sued for violent acts carried out by its military and intelligence agencies.



Foreign states have given Syrian rebels surface-to-surface Grad rockets of a type not previously supplied, in response to a major Russian-backed offensive in Aleppo. The Grad rockets with a range of 22 km and 40 km have been supplied in "excellent quantities" and will be used on battlefronts in Aleppo, Hama and the coastal region, rebel commander Colonel Fares al-Bayouh said.



President Santos of Colombia is looking to salvage a hard-fought peace deal with Marxist rebels after voters rejected it, saying he would name a committee to meet with the staunch political opponents who vigorously opposed the final plan, aimed at ending 52 years of conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

When President Obama awarded Mr Peres the Medal of Freedom in 2012, he stated that "in him, we see the essence of Israel itself — an indomitable spirit that will not be denied." Yet for all the praise, there was also clearly much criticism and resentment. The fact that Mr Peres was considered a 'global treasure' by some and a 'war criminal' by others is a stark reminder of the tremendous weight of responsibility a world leader carries, and the reality that no one is all things to all people.

The expression 'feet of clay', which refers to an admired person's hidden faults, has Biblical origins. In the book of Daniel, the prophet interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a statue made of a variety of materials, with the feet ultimately being the weakest, made of a mixture of iron and clay. This represented the reality that even the loftiest leaders will remain human and will fail in some ways despite other noble achievements.

When Israel went to the prophet Samuel and demanded a human king, he was grieved (1 Samuel 8). The Lord explained at length the consequences of having a human king, but Israel would not relent in their request, so the Lord granted them their desire. And when their kings failed them, He was still willing to respond to their cries.

Shimon Peres may have done great things. So did Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. Yet none of them were also innocent of any wrongdoing. This is important for Christians to keep in mind – that hope is not to be found in human leaders, but in the One who places them in their positions.

PRAY > For renewed efforts towards peace between Israel and Palestine > For those leaders working on peaceful relations in the Middle East > For the Church in Israel to be ambassadors of reconciliation

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING OVERVIEW



capacities, while Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau and UK prime minister Theresa May made their debuts (Mr Trudeau spoke of Canada's plans to become more engaged in global affairs, and Ms May insisted that the UK will remain a global power despite its decision to leave the EU). At the same time, other regular features of the meetings were once again seen, such as leaders using their speeches to denounce their rivals and to further their own national interests (India and Pakistan were primary examples of this in the 2016 meetings).

The failed attempt by the US and Russia to revive a cease-fire in Syria stole the spotlight at the annual United Nations gathering of world leaders but every other global hotspot had its moment. The high-level meetings began with the first-ever UN summit on refugees and migrants called to tackle one of the most contentious issues facing the world: millions of people fleeing conflict and poverty — and not many countries willing to accept them. World leaders approved the New York Declaration aimed at providing a more coordinated and humane response to the largest refugee crisis since World War II, and President Barack Obama secured thousands of new resettlement places and billions of dollars in pledges to help the refugees at a summit the following day. (*Associated Press*)

General overview

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), held every September, involves discussions about international issues and preparations for policies aimed at combatting the most pressing global challenges and problems. Representatives from the UN's 193 member states are in attendance, making it the UN's "principal deliberative and representative body" and "effectively the global parliament of nations" (*Al-Arabiya*).

This year's UNGA, the 71st, was notable for a number of reasons: it was the last time the US president Barack Obama and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon attended in their current

Key issues and challenges

CNN described the key issues at the UNGA as "the world's toughest 'to do' list" – stopping violent extremism, solving the global refugee crisis, fostering peace in the Middle East, and bringing an end to poverty, disease, hunger and the nuclear threat. Added to that list is climate change, human rights and sustainable development. As mentioned in the news extract above, one of the primary talking points on this year's agenda was the refugee crisis, and attempts were made to generate global commitments focused on three key areas: increased funding for humanitarian efforts, the admittance of more refugees through legal means, and more efforts to increase the self-reliance and inclusion of refugees through education and legal work opportunities.

Despite impassioned speeches and impressive rhetoric, Talmiz Ahmad (writing for *Al-Arabiya*) says that there is "a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction with the functioning of [the UNGA] over the last several years". He links this to the challenging reality that "when consensual views do emerge and are articulated robustly", these agreements are "drowned out by the lack of support from the real power centre – the UN Security Council (UNSC)". One of the major issues under discussion is the reform of the UNSC: at present, its five permanent members represent the victors of WWII (the US, the UK, France, Russia and China), and the world has changed in many ways since 1945.

NEWS HEADLINES



Iran marked the anniversary of its 1980 invasion by Iraq by showing off its latest ships and missiles and telling the US not to meddle in the Gulf. It comes at a time of high tension with the US in the strategic waterway. US officials say there have been more than 30 close encounters between US and Iranian vessels in the Gulf so far this year, over twice as many as in the same period of 2015.



The **British** pound slumped after UK Prime Minister Theresa May set a March date to begin exiting from the European Union and said that controlling immigration was a higher priority than maintaining full access to the country's largest trading partner. This puts her at odds with EU counterparts, who have frequently said that Britain must allow freedom of movement to EU citizens if it wishes to keep access to the common market.



Hillary Clinton emerged from the first presidential debate with a five-point lead over Donald Trump in the race for the presidency, having narrowed the enthusiasm gap between her supporters and Trump's, and holding broad advantages over the Republican nominee as the candidate with the right temperament and preparation for the job, according to a new CNN/ORC poll.

Wrapping up a legacy

At this UNGA, particular attention was given to President Obama's final address, and the *New York Times* reported on significant moments. Firstly, there were multiple mentions of "walls", such as the following statement: "A nation ringed by walls would only imprison itself." While Mr Obama would have been addressing foreign leaders who have promoted nationalist interest and sectarianism, there was also an obvious rebuke of presidential candidate Donald Trump (and his desire to build a wall along the border with Mexico).

Secondly, there were various statements that marked "the distance [Mr Obama] has travelled from the hopeful leader" who first addressed the UNGA in 2009. At his first meeting, he pledged to revive peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, while this year, he only devoted one sentence to addressing the issue. When talking about Syria, he said that "we have to be honest about the nature of these conflicts", and that no "outside actor" would be able to "force people from different religious or ethnic groups to coexist peacefully". *The New York Times* described Mr Obama as being "reticent even about his diplomatic achievements" and that as he "exits the world stage", he "sometimes seems less determined to change the world than to come to terms with it".

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Marwan Bishara of *Aljazeera* expressed a conviction that "if only political leaders would rise

to the level of their peoples' sacrifice; if only they would stop sacrificing people for their own personal glory, the world would be a far better place."

From a Christian perspective, how does that resonate with believers? Can Christians hope for world leaders to act in a 'Christian way' (marked by self-sacrifice) if their locus of motivation is not rooted in a genuine Christian faith? Can believers judge them for their actions relative to a Biblical standard if they do not seek truth and guidance in the Bible? Only a living faith in Jesus Christ can produce the kinds of leaders who are truly capable of making the world a better place.

Global leaders, however, are not the only role-players in this picture, and the Church needs to ask itself whether believers, like Mr Obama, are "less determined to change the world than to come to terms with it". Are Christians resigned to things continuing as they are, or motivated and energised by a hope in Christ, who said that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)? While such an attitude may be criticised for being too idealistic, the alternative (a Church resigned to the world continuing in its suffering state) is too bleak and heart-breaking to even contemplate.

PRAY > For global leaders to have godly encounters > For the Lord to use leaders to bring about His plans, even if they do not acknowledge Him > For His body of believers to be motivated by hope in Him, to bring about change in their communities and beyond

PROTESTING STUDENTS DISRUPT UNIVERSITIES



South Africa's president says he is "seriously disturbed" by violent protests at some universities and is calling for calm on campuses nationwide. President Jacob Zuma said in a statement that South Africans have the right to protest peacefully but must obey the law. Students protesting for free education have clashed with police at several campuses in [recent] weeks, forcing classes to be suspended in some cases. Police fired rubber bullets during confrontations at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. (*New York Times*)

Fuelling the demonstrations

Students are protesting against the announcement by government that universities will be allowed to raise the cost of tuition by up to 8% for the coming year, with a subsidy for students from lower income backgrounds. This comes after a year of no increase, in response to 2015 student protests. Since insufficient headway has been made in

addressing the underlying issues which would make free tertiary education a possibility, there have been questions about the sustainability of the proposed moratorium on fee increases

A multitude of factors continue to fuel these demonstrations, but a general pervading frustration over the lack of change in post-apartheid South Africa seems to be the underlying sentiment. Many students say that universities do not reflect the demographics or cultures of the black majority. They also speak of 'historical debt', registration fees, issues of accommodation, campus security, and racism. Course fees, however, continue to be a critical issue since they remain extremely high in relation to household income, and have risen as a result of government lowering their subsidies for universities.

Section 29 of the South African constitution guarantees that "everyone has the right — (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible." However, it has become evident that the government — through their annual reduction of university subsidies, the chaos of the fee subsidy scheme and the poor quality of primary and secondary education — has failed to make further education "progressively available and accessible".

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

INcontext Website:

www.incontextministries.org

Please visit our website for up-to-date information on events around the world.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the articles in this publication or on the website, please feel free to contact us at any time.



INcontext Team Details

Contact:

General - Mike:

Mobile - 0828657380

mike@incontextministries.org

AWIM - Andrew:

andrew@incontextministries.org

Communication - Cheryl:

cheryl@incontextministries.org

Seminars - Eric:

eric@incontextministries.org

Events - Hanlie:

hanlie@incontextministries.org

Prayer - Donnelly:

donnely@incontextministries.org

Projects - Gustav:

gustav@incontextministries.org

Resources / Travel - Stefan:

stefan@incontextministries.org



INcontext Banking Details

SOUTH AFRICA

Bank: ABSA

Name: Incontext

Cheque acc no: 4078983933

Branch: Durbanville (632 005)

UNITED STATES

Account Name: M Burnard

Bank: BMO Harris Bank

Account number:

4818649309

Routing Number:

071025661

A handful of student groups have made written submissions to the Commission of Inquiry on the feasibility of free higher education. They propose new or increased taxes on the wealthy or budget changes. But many are convinced that if the government seriously addressed issues such as corruption, patronage (favours given to friends and family), illegal capital outflows and wasteful spending, together with a reduced cabinet, elimination of deputy ministers, ending 'blue-light brigades' and first-class travel, there would certainly be enough to consider free education. However, reclaiming that money is far easier said than done.

Until the Commission issues its recommendations, the state seems reluctant to introduce new taxes or commit to major budget changes in order to fund free education. A general lack of leadership in government and university management in implementing changes, which would indicate a willingness on their part to address student grievances has exacerbated the mood of protestors.

A global problem

South Africa's current crisis may be closely linked to the struggle to address past inequalities, but they are not alone in their fight against the rising cost of higher education or student protests turning violent. In the United States, many students graduate with huge student loan debts that saddle them with burdensome repayment terms amid a tight job market. Chile has struggled in recent years with protesting students resorting to violence as an expression of their frustration. Countries such as Canada, Australia, the UK, Spain, and Germany have all wrestled, to varying degrees, with the challenge of students protesting the ever-increasing and debilitating costs of tertiary education.

There are very few countries in the world that are in a financial position to offer free tertiary education. The Scandinavian nations, Germany (which scrapped tertiary tuition in response to student protests, between 2008 and 2013),

Argentina, and the Czech Republic are examples of countries that have tuition-free university programs.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Some have suggested that if the Church wants this generation to take it seriously, it needs to be passionate about the issues youth are passionate about, and speak to the issues that concern them. The problem with this, according to Tyrell Haag (a pastor in Johannesburg), is that this approach is not necessarily Biblical or Christ-like: "During Biblical times there was a popular movement by zealots opposed to the Roman government. However, we never see Jesus engaging in a hostile way with the Romans, nor do we see Him encouraging resistance to the oppressive Roman government. Instead, Jesus says things like, 'My kingdom is not of this world otherwise My followers would fight... render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' He also stopped Peter from resisting His arrest. The Lord does not use the same methods as the world; the Church has never brought people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and sins forgiven by joining social and political movements."

This does not mean that Christians should be detached from reality and not show compassion for a broken society. Haag goes on to say: "Romans 13 calls for Christians to respect the state, but it does not forbid Christians from being involved in political activities. Protest forms an important part of the democratic political system. So for believers, who are confronted by important issues in their country and who want to do something to bring about a positive change in the situation, protesting is a viable option. However, it should be in a godly manner; not given to violence, or disrespect for one's opponents. One can be vocal and passionate about a serious issue, with a flavour of someone who is a citizen of heaven and lives and protests by different rules."

PRAY > For wisdom for the SA government and university management in dealing with this crisis > For students to find effective means of protest and avoid violence > For Christians to be effective agents of change

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION



PROJECT FUTURE HOPE

Supporting Christian teachers in North Africa

This project supports six Christian teachers at a Christian school in a North African country. The country's population is 97% Muslim, and since December 2012, the government has made a deliberate attempt to rid the country of all Christian activity. Most foreign missionaries have been expelled and local Christians are struggling financially.

INcontext supports these six teachers to help ensure the future of the Church in this country. If these teachers have to leave the school due to a lack of finances, the school will close down and this will force all the Christian children to go to a Muslim school.

You can help to ensure the future of the Church in this country by supporting these Christian teachers.

To make a donation towards this project, please make use of the INcontext bank details and use Future Hope together with your email (or as much thereof as space allows) as reference.

If you would like more information on this project, please contact our project department: gustav@incontextministries.org