



[Anti-Apartheid and Global Social Justice Advocate Desmond Tutu Passes Away at the Age of 90](#)

An exemplar of morality and a great advocate for the oppressed, South African Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu passed away earlier this week at the age of 90. Archbishop Tutu was a revered figure for his myriad of human rights and social justice activism. In addition to being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his efforts to unite South Africans and peacefully put an end to the immoral system of apartheid in the country, Tutu spoke out against and worked to bring attention to other injustices around the world including Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians. He was a critic of Israel's unlawful and longstanding occupation of Palestinian territory, and drew parallels between the injustices perpetrated by the apartheid system in South Africa and the illegal Israeli occupation. Throughout the course of his remarkable life, Archbishop Tutu evoked particular admiration for his steadfast principles and integrity in fighting for equality, justice, and tolerance on a variety of issues.

Archbishop Tutu was a proponent of peaceful resistance and dialogue, appealing to humanity's moral conscience through his activism. His dedication to humanity brought him to the front of other struggles, some high-profile and others less noticeable. At the time of the 2003 United States-led invasion of Iraq, Desmond Tutu was one of the few world leaders to challenge the assumption of that war's legitimacy and speak out against it. Additionally, Tutu was a frequent visitor to Cyprus, offering guidance to the island nation's divided leaders and working to help them reunify and find common ground.

Tutu once famously said that his cause was to be found wherever humanity was undermined, and anywhere where the lives of people were disregarded. This sense of devotion brought him as an ally to the defense of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. He opposed the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine and was commended for raising awareness regarding Israel's indiscriminate killing of civilians – especially in Gaza. During conflict between Hamas and Israel in 2014, Tutu pushed for both sides to employ dialogue and avoid violence. He characterized the behavior of Israel during the war as disproportionate; 2,200 Palestinians in Gaza were killed, half of whom were civilians and 550 children, compared to the 71 Israelis killed of which 66 were soldiers. He also expressed that the Israeli system of roads, checkpoints, and settlements in the illegally-occupied West Bank was an indignity dispensed to Palestinians and too largely ignored by the West.

Like many who were involved in the South African struggle against apartheid, he demonstrated a strong sympathy for Palestinians. He drew parallels between injustices perpetrated against black South Africans and injustices perpetrated against Palestinians. Archbishop Tutu made trips to the Gaza Strip, alone and with other former leaders, including Jimmy Carter and Nelson Mandela, as part of the organization The Elders. He elicited praise from human rights and social justice activists for frequently condemning Israel's destructive policies and calling them out for what they are – a major impediment and obstacle to the prospects for peace.

While many of South Africa's freedom fighters were imprisoned, Desmond Tutu was one of the few leaders left free to lead the campaign to end apartheid; this ultimately ended through peaceful negotiations between 1990 and 1994. How many lives and livelihoods were ultimately saved by Desmond Tutu's leadership in this struggle for freedom can only be conjectured but its value as an example for the ability of oppressed people to peacefully resist and challenge without losing their own humanity in the process should elevate Archbishop Tutu to within the pantheon of mankind's greatest moral leaders.