



Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, visited campus in September to accept the 2009 Mahatma Gandhi Global Non-violence Award.

# We can have peace in the Holy Land

2009 Mahatma Gandhi Global Nonviolence Award acceptance speech BY JIMMY CARTER

President Rose and Director Mittal, distinguished guests who have come to share our honor of associating ourselves with Mahatma Gandhi, a quiet but courageous champion of peace.

It's been a great life for me and Rosalynn to have a chance to get to know many champions of peace. A lot of people ask me how does it feel to no longer be president of the United States, and I remember the cartoon I saw in *The New Yorker* magazine last year. This little boy is looking up at his father, and he says, "Daddy, when I grow up I want to be a former president."

Well, I know what it means to be a former president. First of all, we've had a chance to drive through the Shenandoah Valley every year since we've been out of the White House to go fishing further north. And I can tell you that we've been in 125 or more countries since we left the White House; there is no place on Earth more beautiful than where you live. And I can tell you we've had a good time coming up here and having a wonderful supper and that sort of thing, but it was worth the trip and the preparation for this ceremony just to hear the beautiful performance of the Shenandoah Valley Children's Choir.

Well, there are many nice things about having been president and no longer being president. I've got Secret Service protection;

I'm never going to run for another office in life so I can say just about anything I want to and get away with it — with one exception. I've been married 63 years to the same woman, and I can't say anything I want to around her; I have to be very careful.

Tonight I've been asked to discuss the prospects for ending a conflict in perhaps the most sensitive area on Earth, where continued violence sends tentacles of hatred and discord and disillusionment and terrorism far beyond its own boundaries. Many of us know and revere this place, because it was the home of the prince of peace. And it's good for us to remember as we contemplate the complexities of the peace efforts in this region that every one of us has an obligation to join those who strive for peace with our prayers and our commitment.

It may be difficult for the audience to remember what I inherited as a new president back 30 years or so ago. There was an oil embargo by the Arab OPEC nations against the United States of America and a secondary boycott against any corporation in America that did business with Israel. There had been four major wars in the preceding 25 years, all of them led by Egypt, which was the only Arab country that had Soviet military support back then that was a formidable challenger for Israel. There had been no

concerted effort to have a peace process before I was elected president, and there were no demands on me after I was in office to initiate negotiations.

Strangely we lacked any site or place in America as a reminder of the despicable acts or facets of the Nazi regime in Germany. Also, the Soviet Union back in those days was not permitting Jews to leave Russia, except just a handful each year.

As president, the first few weeks, I began to meet with the leaders of Israel, of Jordan, of Lebanon, of Syria, of Egypt to try to induce them to join with me in some effort. And I put maximum pressure on the Soviet Union to start granting human rights for its own citizens. This increased tension between me and President Brezhnev during the Cold War years when both sides had enormous arsenals of nuclear weapons. I mean we knew that we could not only destroy each other, but we could destroy the entire Earth if that should occur. Within two years, with that pressure for human rights, we were able to see a handful of Jews increase to 50,000 or more each year coming out of the Soviet Union.

We passed a law that prohibited any American corporation from honoring the secondary boycott and put heavy criminal penalties against any chief executive officer who complied and had a boycott against Israel.

In 1978 on the South Lawn of the White House, with Prime Minister Menachem Begin and several hundred Jewish rabbis present, I announced a commission to establish a memorial to victims of Hitler's atrocities. With Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor as its chairman, the Holocaust Museum in Washington now is the result of that good work.

That same year, I was able to negotiate with Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. In exchange for peace, Israel agreed to grant full autonomy to the Palestinians and to withdraw Israeli military and political forces from the West Bank and from Gaza. This was a difficult thing for Menachem Begin to agree to, but it was submitted to the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, and it was approved by an 85 percent majority.

Six months later after intense negotiation, we were able to sign a peace treaty between

Israel and Egypt, not a word of which has been violated now in more than 30 years. So, this really removed the only major military challenge that Israel had had up until that time, and they haven't had one since.

So I left office believing that Israel would soon realize its dream of peace with its neighbors — a small nation that exemplified the finest ideals based on Hebrew Scriptures that I've taught in my local churches since I was 18 years old. It's interesting to note that in the *Old Testament* in the Hebrew text the word "justice" is mentioned 28 times and "righteousness" is mentioned 196 times.

Since leaving the White House, I have traveled whenever possible in the Middle Eastern region to encourage peaceful relationships between Israel and all its neighbors, and I've led the Carter Center in monitoring three elections among the Palestinian people in Gaza, East Jerusalem and in the West Bank. This required a thorough knowledge on our part of every part of Palestine, every political candidate, all of their platform planks, every little village. We've had to visit them and get to know them.

I've been to the region three times in the last year including the Israeli village of Sderot, which is only three miles from the northern border of Gaza where a number of missiles and mortar shells fired from nearby Gaza have fallen and frightened the people. More recently, just in April, I visited Gaza where schools and hospitals and public buildings have been wiped out along with 50,000 Palestinian homes either completely destroyed or greatly damaged by the Israeli attacks on Gaza in January of this year.

One and a half million Palestinians now live and struggle to survive in an enormous ghetto area completely surrounded by a high wall and without any ability to visit the outside world by air or sea or land. Israelis so far have not permitted one sack of cement or one board of lumber to go into Gaza to be used to repair the damaged homes and other buildings.

Recently, a United Nations human rights committee made a report on this headed by Judge Richard Goldstone, who is a devout and practicing Jew. And he pointed out that both sides have been guilty — the Gazans firing missiles into civilian areas and Israel in its actions against Gaza. The report claims that Israelis deliberately targeted Christians

**'So I left office believing that Israel would soon realize its dream of peace with its neighbors.'**

## A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

*On Sept. 21, former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, visited campus to accept the 2009 Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence award in front of a packed audience at the Convocation Center.*

*Following is a portion of the public ceremony introduction by the Gandhi Center director.*

**BY SUSHIL MITTAL**, director of the Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence

TO EACH OF YOU who are here with us tonight at James Madison University, I offer my thanks. We have gathered here to express our deep appreciation to Rosalynn and Jimmy Carter for the many years that they have served the nation, the human family throughout the world, the fragile planet on which we live,

and most of all the people who otherwise may not be heard and may not survive because they are too old or young, too sick, or too poor to have access to reliable shelter. The Carters have responded, in partnership and individually, to major human needs. They have devoted many years to ongoing service projects. They have given new vitality to a universal and deeply rooted humanitarian conscience that Mahatma Gandhi understood, welcomed in others, honored and embodied in his own experiments with truth. And so it is entirely fitting for the Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence at Madison to recognize their exemplary service.

The presence of the former president and first lady will remind us that the kinds of challenges that they have been willing to face are ones that call out to us, too. While we are acknowledging and appreciating their work tonight, may the same kindly light be rekindled in each of us, may the same resolve to serve others become more keen and strong in each of us, and may we become more effective contributors to the change that we wish to have happen within us, in others and all around this suffering world.

Rosalynn Carter has been active in the work of the nonprofit partnership Project Interconnections, which provides housing for homeless peo-



**Sushil Mittal, JMU Gandhi Center director, and former President Jimmy Carter lead the ceremonial lamp lighting during the awards presentation.**

ple who are mentally ill, and Habitat for Humanity which is a network of volunteers who build homes for the needy. In cooperation with several institutions that include her alma mater Georgia Southwestern University, Emory University and the Carter Center in Atlanta, she has been instrumental in developing programs to strengthen early childhood health through immunization, to promote more effective mental health policy, to apply conflict-resolution resources in a wide variety of settings, and to train and support family-based as well as professional caregivers. As in her other areas of service, Mrs. Carter and her colleagues are working to raise public awareness and at the same time to discover increasingly effective evidence-based practices that really work in the real world to help real people.

Rosalynn Carter very clearly is an inspiring teacher and writer in addition to being an effective advocate for family and community cooperation in action. Among her four books, two focus on the caregiving theme: *Helping Yourself Help Others: A Book for Caregivers and Helping Someone with Mental Illness: A Compassionate Guide for Family, Friends, and Caregivers*.

Jimmy Carter is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, served the country in the Navy and afterward returned home to manage the farms that had been built up by his late father. Community service carried him into politics. Eventually he was elected governor of Georgia and later 39th President of the United States. After the presidency, his commitment to community service continued to keep him extraordinarily active both locally and internationally, as well as through his authorship of some two dozen books. After he left the White House in 1981, the next year he joined Emory University and founded the Carter Center, a separately governed unit of the university that is dedicated to “waging peace, fighting disease, building hope.”

The difficult, delicate and at times unpopular work that is required for waging peace has involved the former president in frequent travel



A capacity crowd of students, professors, alumni, community members, performers and media congratulate former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn.

and that this constitutes crimes against humanity. The Israeli leaders obviously condemned the report as biased.

Now, I guess among all Americans, you might say leaders, hardly anybody knows any better than I the harsh rhetoric and the acts of violence that have torn apart the Middle East. I'm familiar with the fear that has existed among Israelis because of terrorist attacks that came across their border from Palestine into downtown Jerusalem and other cities, and I know that crimes have been committed by both sides.

I've reiterated my own condemnation of any such acts against innocent people at any time or for any goal. Like many of you, I have prayed for and worked for peace for Israel and its neighbors based on justice for the Palestinians.

During the past three years, I wrote two books. Rosalynn always likes for me to remark that they are still on sale. The last one was titled *We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land*, and that's the main theme of my talk tonight. We can have peace in the Holy Land.

As President Barack Obama has made clear, the key factor that prevents peace is the continuing building of Israeli settlements inside Palestine, driven by a determined minority of Israelis, not a majority but minority, who desire to occupy and colonize East Jerusalem and the West Bank. And because of this intrusion on their own land, of course Palestinians have committed acts of violence against Israelis, so the cycle continues.

As you probably know, these two areas — Israel and Palestine — comprise the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. These two areas, East Jerusalem and West Bank, just make up 22 percent, about one-fifth of the total. Israel

makes up 77 percent and Gaza just 1 percent. Now the choice hilltops, the vital water resources and the productive rich bottom land have been taken by Israeli settlers. And like a spider web, these settlers are connected to one another by major highways, many of which are prohibited from use by the Palestinians. In a number of cases, Palestinians are not even permitted to cross the highways to get from one part of their farm or grazing lands to another.

So what this does is divide up what's left



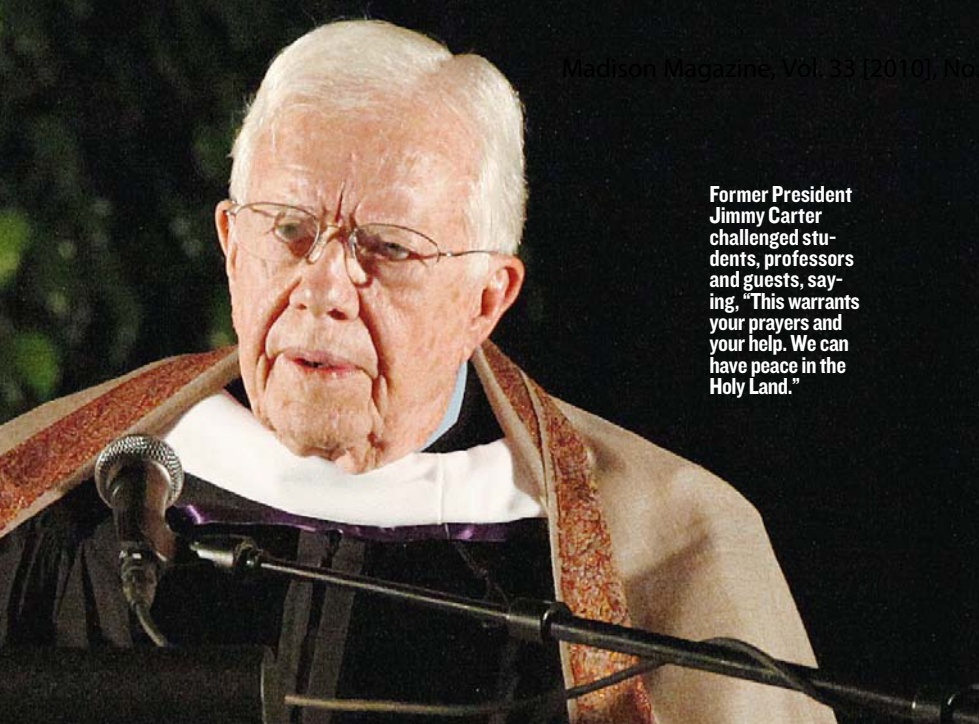
of the West Bank into little tiny compartments or cantonments. There are more than 200 Israeli settlements in the West Bank and more than 500 roadblocks that prevent Palestinians from riding from one place to another. And there is a huge dividing wall mostly inside the West Bank and sometimes 40-feet high that obstructs it from passage and makes lives of Palestinians almost impossible. This harms Israel's reputation for justice and righteousness. It angers the world, the Arab world as well, and it makes peace impossible. It would be an intriguing experience for any of you — students, professors or just other citizens — to visit the West Bank and Gaza, talk to the people there and to see if I've exaggerated or whether I've incorrectly described what's going on there.

**'Like many of you, I have prayed for and worked for peace for Israel and its neighbors based on justice for the Palestinians.'**

I understand that much of our nation's support — yours and mine — for the existence and security of Israel, which is paramount, comes from among Christians like me who've been taught since childhood to honor and respect

and protect God's chosen people from whom came our own Savior Jesus Christ.

An additional powerful factor is a political organization called the American Israel Public Affairs Committee or AIPAC, which exercises its legitimate goal to defend and protect whatever policies the Israeli government has at any time. And in this country there are practically no voices that speak out on the other side, and there is no debate at all within the U.S. Congress or among people who seek public office.



Former President Jimmy Carter challenged students, professors and guests, saying, "This warrants your prayers and your help. We can have peace in the Holy Land."

I'm convinced that the withdrawal of Israel's occupying forces from Palestine, Syria and also the West Bank will dramatically reduce the threats that exist in Israel. All 22 Arab countries have offered full diplomatic recognition to Israel, and full trade and commerce just like they have with each other, if Israel will withdraw from occupied territories and comply with other United Nations resolutions, which the Israeli's themselves have supported in the past.

The Arabs have left open the opportunity for the pre-1967 borders to be modified by good faith talks between Israel and the Palestinians that would permit as many as half of the Israeli settlers to stay in Palestine and to swap an equal amount of land to the Palestinians from Israel. And this could provide a corridor that connects Gaza from the West Bank, which is about 27 miles, as you probably know.

This offer of two states living in peace between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is supported by the United States of America. It is supported by all the agreements that have been approved by Israel, particularly those of 1978 and again in 1993. It is also supported by the so-called road map of the international quartet that comprises the United States, the European Union, United Nations and the Soviet Union or Russia. The alternative to two states is one state, or one nation between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea, where Jews and Arabs live together in the same country. But in just a few years there will be a majority of Arabs living in that region, and this means that the Arabs can out vote the Jews and do away with the Jewish state of Israel or they would be deprived of their civil rights as subjugated in the same country.

You can see that this is the only alternative

to the two-state solution, and the two-state solution is one that is endorsed by all those that I just mentioned. And this is a goal that President Obama is now pursuing. He'll be meeting with the leaders of Israel and Palestine at the United Nations tomorrow.

President Obama has made this a high priority for his administration; and he deserves the support of all Americans, whether they're Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives, it doesn't matter. The bottom line is that Israel will never find peace until it is willing to withdraw from its neighbors' land and permit the Palestinians living side by side in peace to exercise their basic rights.

This promise of peace in exchange for Palestine territory adequate for a viable and contiguous nation has been acceptable for several decades to a substantial majority of Israelis. These same premises of Israel's peaceful existence honoring former agreements and the rejection of violence will have to be accepted by any government that represents the Palestinians as well. So both sides have responsibilities to carry out, and they are very clear-cut. In fact, last year a poll that was conducted by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem found that 81 percent of all the citizens living in the occupied territory, including Gaza and the West Bank and East Jerusalem, favored this kind of peace agreement, along with 63 percent of all the Israeli citizens.

Well, what I've described in these few minutes is a clear but difficult pathway — the only one to what all of us want, a secure Israel living within its own borders in harmony with its neighbors.

In closing, let me say again, and this warrants your prayers and your help. We can have peace in the Holy Land. Thank you very much. ❧

and in numerous efforts at conflict mediation in the last two decades in many nations of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. In recognition, the Nobel Committee awarded President Carter the Peace Prize in 2002 "for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development." More recently, he has become one of the younger members of a small group of "global elders" that includes Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and a few others who together seek ways to reduce conflict, restore justice and give voice to those who are not heard.

Yet even with all these many responsibilities,

Mr. and Mrs. Carter maintain a commitment that now goes back a quarter-century to set aside one week of every year to work alongside volunteers for Habitat for Humanity. The presence of the Carters, as you might expect, attracts support from many organizations and individuals, and it makes possible the construction of a large

number of houses in a very short time as part of an annual Jimmy Carter Work Project. In 2006, for instance, the Carters were joined by 2,000 other volunteers, including more than 100 U.S. sailors on leave, in doing the hands-on construction work of building homes for villagers in south-western India. This was also an effort in the larger project of Habitat for Humanity that aims to complete the construction of homes for a quarter-million people in India in the coming years.

The connection between the Carters and India, of course, is not a new one, and it goes back at least a generation. ... President Carter's mother Lillian Carter was a dedicated and skilled nurse. In 1966, then well into her 60s, she joined the Peace Corps and was sent as a volunteer to India. In off-duty hours, she also worked in a clinic that served factory workers. When the younger Carters worked in India in 2006, they were continuing a great family tradition. Miss Lillian, as she was known, was long remembered in India, and is the subject of one of the most revealing and insightful of the many books written by the former president; it is titled *A Remarkable Mother*.

Tonight the Gandhi Center honors Rosalynn and Jimmy Carter, although in truth they honor us by being here with us. ❧

\* Learn more at [www.jmu.edu/gandhicenter](http://www.jmu.edu/gandhicenter)

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