



## **What is Peace?**

Peace Message delivered by IPI President Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein  
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What is peace? ... well, this has been asked so often throughout history — alas because it needs to be answered so often, the question itself becomes almost banal.

Yet, it is the question of the Divine, of the prophets, and sacred too.

So why pose to me?

To us?

Should we not pose it to those who upend it so easily? Should we not pose it to Min Aung Hlaing, Vladimir Putin, Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo, Benjamin Netanyahu and Yahya Sinwar?

Is it not likely they will all claim they themselves are fighting for peace and must use violence for the sake of it?

Well, pose it then to the Secretary-General of the UN, or to the President of the UN Security Council, or the Prosecutor of the ICC, and they will say words both eloquent and true, something in the form of they too are striving for it.

So pose it to those surviving the most brutal denials of it, the civilian population of Gaza and Lebanon, the civilian population of Ukraine, the civilians of Myanmar, the civilians of Sudan

and the millions others who have recently experienced war or violence, the wrecked survivors of war. Many would say just end our suffering. Global peace will appear remote to those who are stuck deep in the labyrinth of horror.

Indeed, the world seems to be heading elsewhere; toward the savagery of unconfined warfare, where being a civilian offers oneself no protection at all.

The repetitiveness of war and our inability to finally overcome it, and learn anything from it, is dispiriting. While we as individuals need partial memory loss as we age to soften out our sadnesses and, in this sense, some memory loss is a blessing; for leaders of governments and rebel groups, however, national amnesia or the refusal to internalize history and past mistakes, is beyond tragic; it is a damnation for their people and for others.

So by posing this question to me, I can only fail in my providing you with a satisfying answer.

Pose it instead to those who — like the architects of “A Land for All”, will instill hope in us. By their sheer cleverness, the Israeli and Palestinian lawyers and activists behind this initiative — even in the middle of all the hatred so pure on both sides, are doing something rather remarkable. They seem to have pinned down not just a visionary but also a practical equation for achieving a just and lasting peace to the Middle East conflict on the basis of the Two-States. Look them up. They represent peace beautifully — of what peace can be, and to me at least, answer by their very person, and example, the question: what is peace?

Thank you.