Shimon Peres - a visionary of peace and dialogue died at the age of 93

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Shimon Peres, former prime minister and president of Israel, died Wednesday, Sept. 28, at the age of 93 following a stroke.

Peres, who received the Nobel Peace Prize for the Oslo Accords he negotiated with Palestinians in 1993, was the last major surviving founder of Israel. He transformed himself from a hawkish defender of the Jewish state to a supporter of the two-stat solution. As a man of dialogue he believed that Israelis and Palesinians someday would and could co-exist in peace. His death was mourned not only by poltical leaders worldwide, but also by religious leaders, who remember him for reaching out to people, he once considered his enemies.

“Shimon Peres understood that the greatness of Israel lies in its embrace of our better selves, and he spent his life challenging himself and others to reach for the impossible. Often, he achieved it”, said Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. And Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, emphasized Peres was "the great visionary of Israeli politics in our time". He added: "Though he received the Nobel Prize for the efforts in the Oslo peace process his greatest achievements came toward the end of his long career in public life, as President of the State of Israel. It was in this capacity that he became one of the great statesmen of our time, a living embodiment of the prophet Joel’s remark that ‘Your old men shall dream dreams,’ helping the young to ‘see visions.’ He constructed a compelling vision of hope.”

In a telegram to Israeli President Reuvin Rivlin, the pope says he was “deeply saddened” to learn of Peres’ death and offers his condolences. “I fondly recall my time with Mr. Peres at the Vatican and renew my great appreciation for the late President’s tireless efforts in favor of peace. As the State of Israel mourns Mr. Peres, I hope that his memory and many years of service will inspire us all to work with ever greater urgency for peace and reconciliation between peoples. In this way, his legacy will truly be honored and the common good for which he so diligently labored will find new expressions, as humanity strives to advance on the path towards enduring peace. With the assurance of my prayers for all who grieve, especially for the Peres family, I invoke the divine blessings of consolation and strength upon the nation.”

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