

From the United Nations to the **United People**



5/5/2025

**CRI DE COEUR BY Dr. TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH
GLOBAL JUSTICE FOR GLOBAL PEACE**

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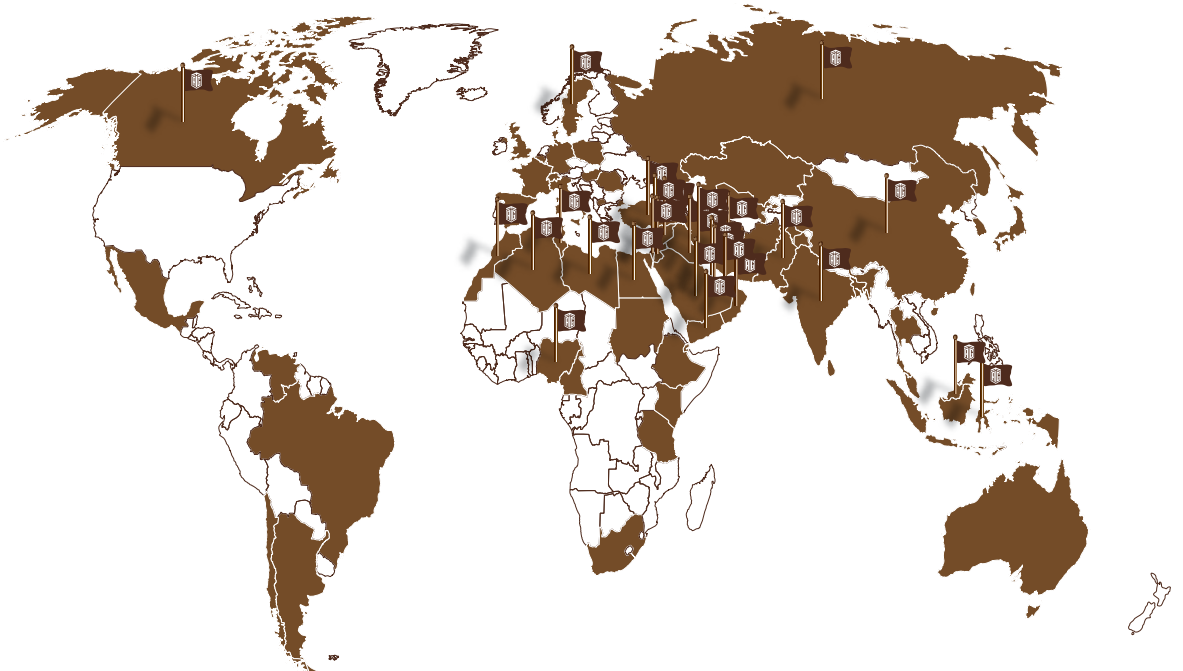


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PREFACE

Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.

— Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist

The United Nations is built upon three pillars. It was created “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

During its illustrious 80-year history, the UN can boast myriad achievements toward these noble goals. For example, the UN intervened decisively in the Suez Crisis of 1956, just a little over ten years after its creation, which marked the birth of modern UN peacekeeping, and averted a larger war at the time. The UN also played a key role in ending El Salvador’s 12-year civil war in the 1990s. This peacekeeping role has made a contribution all around the world from Europe to Africa to Asia to South America, and is perhaps the most representative example of its idealistic purpose put to action.

In recent years, the United Nations has notably used its international and intergovernmental authority to promote global standards of equity in the development and use of information and communication technologies around the world, and in efforts at remediation of human contributions to climate change, which is influenced most by developed countries, while its impacts are felt most by the least developed countries.

Having served the United Nations in many leadership capacities in my lifetime, I have deep reverence for the UN, its principles, and its achievements. Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting and working with many world leaders, CEOs, Nobel Prize winners (including distinguished scientists, writers, artists, and civil society activists), as well as others from all walks of life. I have learned so much from people whose experience, intellect, insight into and dedication to world peace are truly inspiring.

I continue to learn from them to this day, and what I am learning today is that the younger generation, the next generation of CEOs and world leaders and luminaries want a different sort of organization: one that recognizes that the world today is so far removed from what “the old guard” like me think it is, that you can’t solve today’s problems with yesterday’s solutions, that it requires a meaningful shift not just in how the UN operates, but also what it stands for. It is because of this learning that I am writing this plea, this “Cri de Coeur” for the UN to look inward in order to meet the pivotal moment in which we find ourselves; a moment that demands more of us than ever and in ways we never foresaw.

“The scourge of war” haunts us still; but today we are more interdependent than ever before: each of us more directly affected by one another no matter how far apart we are, and all of us more impacted and vulnerable to tragedies and injustices no matter how far from us they happen. We speak of record homelessness and the first trillionaire in the same breath; of WMDs and starvation as equally lethal weapons of war; of loneliness epidemics plaguing the most connected generation in history; of artificial intelligence, crypto currency, corporatism and colonizing Mars. A brave new world indeed. Are we ready for it? With a recast UN, I am certain we will be.

On October 24th, 2025, as the UN turns 80, the organization has a historic opportunity, an obligation, to evolve beyond uniting the governments of nations to uniting all the peoples of the world. This is for sure an ambitious project, but what is the UN if not ambitious?

1. A BIG OVERHAUL. WHY AND WHY NOW?

Our liberty, too, is endangered if we pause for the passing moment, if we rest on our achievements, if we resist the pace of progress. For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.

—John F. Kennedy, US President, in 1963.

The post-war world order built on United Nations principles is under severe stress. The international system is in danger of crumbling in the face of the great challenges of the 21st century and pressures generated by a fast-changing world.

At the start of the 21st century we have entered a new, more perilous phase in world history where several inter-connected forces are endangering our common future. At the same time, rapid technological advances in several fields are opening vast new frontiers of human progress and wellbeing.

We are thus at a moment in time when the world is at a fork with two alternative paths: one leading to existential peril and another of boundless possibility of sustainable progress, prosperity and peace. Now is the time to make the right choice: that of strengthening peaceful international cooperation to secure our common future.



2. CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The world has changed dramatically in the first two decades of the 21st century. The Great Financial Crisis of 2008 and the Covid Pandemic of 2019-21 caused severe shocks to the world economy and to national political systems. Despite a partial recovery from these major shocks, the world is still in a period of uncertainty and turmoil.

The international environment has turned far less favorable to peaceful cooperation to meet the great challenges of the 21st century, and to achieve common ends.

The rise of China and several other emerging countries in the Global South has created a multipolar world calling into question the post World War II order.

Given that the world is in a moment of great flux and the big power game is taking a new turn, it is far too soon to predict with any degree of certainty the nature and direction of international relations even in the short term. On the other hand, a more practical human response to threats and challenges lies in “cooperation” which is likely to produce better results for all parties, if properly managed to ensure a level playing field. This idea of mutually beneficial peaceful cooperation, although flouted often and by many, is at the heart of the post war international system anchored in the United Nations.

What is clear, however, is that we are witnessing a new phase of strong competition and growing tensions between major powers that could potentially lead to armed conflict as happened in Ukraine when Russia and the Western Powers could not agree on the expansion of NATO to Ukraine.

The US and China are competing for advantage in the strategic, economic and technological spheres and are known to prepare for a possible war over Taiwan. A new arms race is underway involving not only traditional and nuclear rearmament but new technological weapons, including the militarization of space, the development of ever bigger weapons of mass destruction, and autonomous, self-directed arms and delivery systems. An armed conflict between China and the US could easily spin out of control and turn into a global nuclear conflagration with incalculable consequences for human civilization as we know it.

Today the world seems to have lost sight of the basic adage of the nuclear age: “Nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought”. According to the Stimson Center, “Already, the United States is in the process of developing, producing, or deploying at least three new weapons systems that can be alternatively called: less-than-deterrent, non-strategic, tactical, or battlefield nuclear weapons. These are weapons that are not meant to reinforce the deterrence-first approach that many Americans have come to believe the U.S. nuclear arsenal is based around today. Instead, they are part of a murkier Cold War-style nuclear warfighting strategy meant to fight and “win” a limited nuclear war at the theater level.” It is clear and beyond frightening that the USA’s official posture on nuclear weapons has gone from the idea that they should never be used, and nonproliferation, to “let’s win this thing!” Based on this, it is only fair to say that some of the top leaders in the world are categorically insane! If only the UN had the power to do something about this untold abomination.

In his seminal book, “The Avoidable War: the Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between China and the United States” (published in 2013), Mr. Kevin Hudd, former Prime minister and Foreign Minister of Australia and a renowned China expert, has made a trenchant analysis of the sources of the Sino-American rivalry. He has outlined five different scenarios of how the two Superpowers” could, in his own words, “sleepwalk” into armed conflict based on their perceived strategic interests, divergent worldviews, cultural differences and mutual misunderstandings.

According to his analysis, China is determined and preparing to reunite Taiwan with the mainland, if necessary, by force, by around 2030. He considers a war between the US and China within the foreseeable future a real possibility. He has called the management of US- China rivalry to prevent such a catastrophic conflict as the greatest strategic challenge of our time. He lays out both pessimistic and optimistic scenarios of the future course of their relations. He makes a convincing case for the two sides to work together to find a modus vivendi even if they were to continue their strategic competition by establishing guardrails and rules to avoid stumbling into armed conflict and developing modes of cooperation on key global challenges such as climate change and preventing and managing regional conflict situations.

The current state of relations between the major powers has made the prevention and management of conflict situations more and more difficult, added a great deal of uncertainty to the future course of the world economy, ended serious disarmament efforts, including negotiations to renew, update or replace past strategic and nuclear arms agreements. World peace has thus become far more fragile and vulnerable to miscalculations and the whims of the decision-makers in these capitals.

This is particularly true when the United States insists on “strategic competition” as a guiding rationale in the relationship, while China’s preferred mode for the relationship is a “common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable approach to security negotiations. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, during bilateral nuclear negotiations in 2024 one long-term Chinese participant stated he had “lost heart” in the process; and in his view the fault lies squarely on the US side, saying “The Window of opportunity for China and the United States to avoid an arms race is closed.”

The post-cold war era of globalization, free trade and technological cooperation is coming to an end. The Ukraine war has fractured the trade and economic cooperation between the Western Powers and Russia. With the possibility of a cease-fire in Ukraine now in sight, the relations between the US, Russia and Europe might take a new turn.

The present trends of climate change and environmental degradation pose a serious threat to human progress. Year after year, the world is experiencing record temperatures, more frequent and severe extreme weather events and forest fires, melting glaciers and rising seas. Most climate scientists agree that the growing intensity and frequency of extreme weather is caused by human-induced climate change.

The assessments presented to the 29th Conference of the Parties to the Paris Accords (COP 29) held in November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan, show that with every increment of warming the world will become more and more dangerous. Beyond 1.5 c new risks will emerge associated with sea-level rise, permafrost degradation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, more extreme weather and food insecurity.

The IPCC, the Climate Tracker and most other scientists agree that average annual temperatures are rising well above the rate necessary (at 0.20 c - 0.22 c as against the required 0.16c), to keep the world average temperature to the maximum increase of 1.5 c -2.0 c by the end of this century. The world is not on track to meet this target under present trends in mitigation, adaptation, climate resilience and climate finance. The industrialized and developing countries who are responsible for most of the carbon emissions are not meeting even the voluntary minimal obligations undertaken by them in the Paris Accords.

This grim assessment does not, however, mean that catastrophic climate change is inevitable. Progress is being made on many fronts, but it is uneven and too slow. The fight against climate change is not a zero- sum game. As shown by the boom in the renewable energy sector in the US, China, Germany and several other countries, progress towards transition is possible and money can be made with audacious investments in the development of new technologies.



3. UNITED IN NAME ONLY?

Although it is named “The United Nations,” any neutral observer can see that the world organization is often disharmonious in its functioning. Its members are divided into competing groups of states with divergent interests who push the organization in different directions.

The victors of World War II presented the United Nations to the world as the embodiment of the people’s aspirations for peace, security, prosperity and personal dignity. Hence the opening words of the UN Charter: “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war....”. These opening words were intended to make people feel that it was their organization. In practice, the United Nations is an organization of member states represented by their governments which interact among themselves essentially on the basis of their perceived ‘national interests’.

One consequence of this dichotomy between the image and the reality has been that while UN outcomes and actions often reflect the least common denominator of divergent interests and minimal consensus, public expectations far exceed these limited results.

This gap between promise and practice has, from the start, spawned continuous cycles of reform of the organization.

But the scope of these reforms has also been constrained by the need for inter-governmental consensus. Thus far, reform measures have focused largely on changes in the composition of inter-governmental bodies, restructuring of Secretariats, streamlining and reducing bureaucracy, improving working methods, controlling the budget and reducing expenditures, strengthening coordination among agencies, funds and programs, increasing financing for development programs and activities to achieve agreed objectives, etc.

Unfortunately, the word ‘reform’ has often been used by governments and various other groups for any changes proposed by them to reflect their own interests and perspectives, irrespective of whether they improved the functioning of the organization, advanced its overall goals and objectives or served the common interests of the peoples of the world.

A key to understanding how reforms have come about and worked in the UN is to examine the diverse motives and perspectives of their proponents.

Most relevant among these are the perspectives of member States, including major contributors, the Nordics and other Western European countries, the Group of 77, China, East European countries, the incoming Secretaries General, civil society groups, and academics.

The major contributors are the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council, as well as Japan, Germany and Italy. The US is the largest contributor, with an assessed contribution of 22% of the regular budget and China is the second largest with a 16% assessed contribution.

In calling for UN reform, the major contributors, except for China, have often focused on controlling expenditures, cutting activities and improving efficiency. Developing countries organized as the Group of 77, on the other hand, see reform as a way of enhancing UN capacity and influence and increasing the resources available to the organization for development assistance to them. China mostly aligns with the Group of 77 in its perspective on UN reform. The Nordics and other Western European countries align with the major contributors in calling for greater efficiency and effectiveness of the organization but also support more assistance to developing countries and enhancing its impact. Eastern European countries are in general in support of reforms that would lead to controlling expenditures and reducing their assessed contributions.

The new Secretaries General, on taking office, have often seen an opportunity to recast the organizational priorities and institutional arrangements to bring them in line with the changing international environment and to reflect emerging issues and priorities.

What is often missing is the perspective of people's needs and aspirations. The limited engagement of non-governmental organizations under Article 71 of the Charter serves as a proforma proxy of the people. The observer status in the General Assembly is used mostly to allow other organizations to express their views which do not always carry much weight in intergovernmental negotiations.

Since its early years, many academic and civil society groups have taken a keen interest in the workings of the world body. They tend to look for ways to strengthen the organization and have come up with many practical and worthwhile proposals to strengthen and improve its functioning. Their focus of attention has been the Security Council, its composition and legitimacy, the veto power of the P5 and its methods of work. Another constant refrain has been the reform of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), its functional commissions, its subsidiary bodies and its mandate to coordinate the work of UN Funds and Programs (UNDP, UNRWA, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNHCR, UNA, etc.) and the specialized agencies (ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, ITU, WMO, UNWTO, etc.).

Thus, starting in the 1950s, every decade has seen a new cycle of UN reform. This has enabled the organization to evolve and remain, to some extent, relevant to the changing international environment and to respond, although with limited success, to new and emerging issues and global challenges over the eighty years of its existence.

Most notably, the major world conferences and summits organized by the UN have made it possible for the UN to focus international attention on new and emerging issues. The ‘UN Conference on the Human Environment held in 1972’, was the first global conference to focus the world’s attention on the environment and similarly, the ‘World Summit on the Information Society’ held in 2003-2005 first brought the emerging issues of ICTs to a global stage with a development focus, expressing the “common desire and commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. These conferences also greatly expanded the engagement of major stakeholders and groups on key global issues and challenges. Likewise, the UN processes of agreeing upon and launching global goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) , and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have attracted the engagement of large numbers of relevant actors and the media.

Still, the reforms undertaken over the past eight decades were never intended to, nor did they make any real change in the fundamental character and functioning of the United Nations and its affiliated UN system bodies as a loosely knit inter-governmental group of organizations with their own governing bodies and only nominal authority exercised by the Secretary General, the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

In particular, the functioning of the Security Council in the areas of international peace and security, and of the ICJ in the field of international law and justice, have remained essentially insulated from the rest of the UN bodies and practically devoid of public engagement and rather opaque in their functioning. This splendid isolation of the Security Council and of the ICJ has detracted from their legitimacy and effectiveness.

The fragmentation of the United Nations system remains a major area of concern. Many reforms and changes have been made over the years to improve the functioning of the UN system but with very limited results. The question is: How to achieve real coordination and close cooperation and even integration of actions among organs, organizations and agencies of the United Nations, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization, so that they act in unison on common issues and shared objectives?

These international organizations were intended to function as ‘the UN system’, but the gap between the image and reality remains very large. They operate more as independent entities than as a system. Moreover, the scope of their development assistance activities is akin to a cottage industry as their programs and projects are mostly small scale making it difficult for them to have a major impact at the national or macro levels.

Much more substantive and result-oriented collaboration than has been realized thus far is also needed between the UN, the regional and sub-regional organizations, professional and business associations and academic institutions from around the world. Equally important is to engage the private sector much more actively as a major source of investments, knowledge, expertise and innovation while ensuring the neutrality of the UN and avoiding any conflicts of interest.

In my view, a new approach to UN reform is needed to make it fit for meeting the great challenges of the 21st century.

4. TRANSFORMATION OR OBSOLESCENCE

Governing a great nation is like cooking a small fish - handle with care
—Laozi, philosopher and author

The United Nations finds itself, 80 years following its founding, at an inflection point. On May 2nd, 2025, Reuters reported on a six-page self-assessment prepared by a task force appointed in March by Secretary General António Guterres outlining “a massive overhaul of The United Nations...that would consolidate dozens of U.N. agencies into four primary departments: peace and security, humanitarian affairs, sustainable development, and human rights.”

Long a proponent of U.N. reform, in 2017, Guterres said the agency was held back by “fragmented structures, byzantine procedures [and] endless red tape.” Additionally, since Trump took office in January, he has cut billions in funding from the organization.

Much of the high-level memo is focused on cost-cutting, but what the organization is facing is more than financial distress: the UN’s legitimacy is repeatedly and publicly being questioned not just by impassioned politicians but also by the public at large. Studies reveal that the global body is facing increasing criticism that it has failed to prevent war and genocide, that it does not care about ordinary people, and that it reinforces selective and sometimes misleading narratives that serve Western geopolitical interests. In other words, the United Nations is failing its very own name.



5. THE UN: UNEVOLVED, UNLOVED AND UNKNOWN

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.

—Aristotle, philosopher and polymath

Despite all the good it has done and tries to do in the world, the UN is suffering from a serious and multi-faceted image problem.

Per the The Global Observatory (GO), published by the International Peace Institute, surveys used to assess global sentiment “are not representative of the global population. Most notably, Pew only surveys “advanced economies,” while the 46 least developed countries are dramatically underrepresented across all surveys. Moreover, none of these cross-country surveys cover the countries hosting multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations.

This gap could present a warped picture of the UN’s legitimacy, in part because people in developed countries, who are overrepresented in existing survey data, are far less likely to interact with the UN directly. Meanwhile, the people most likely to interact directly with the UN—for example, people receiving humanitarian assistance or protection—are mostly left out of the data. This gap is especially problematic because the UN will be less effective at delivering on its mandate if it lacks legitimacy among those it is most directly meant to serve and protect.”

Additionally, according to a first-of-its-kind study titled “The Elite–Citizen Gap in International Organization Legitimacy” published by Cambridge University Press, a “legitimacy gap” also exists between the citizens and the elite, with citizens giving the United Nations 37.5% less legitimacy than the elite, the largest divergence, i.e., the biggest gap, found across the 6 key International Organizations in the study (ICC, IMF, UN, WB, WHO, and WTO).

6. JUSTICE FOR SOME

There is no greater tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice.

—Montesquieu, historian and political philosopher

Cord Meyer, a WWII veteran, a CIA official and an important member of the US delegation to the San Francisco Conference, once said that the United Nations voting system “borders on hypocrisy or self-delusion.” In an article he penned for *The Atlantic* in September 1947, Meyer minced no words: “The Charter creates a double standard of international morality. The weak country without an ally among the permanent members is to be swiftly punished for its transgressions. The strong are to enjoy unfettered license. Despite its solemn expressions of high purpose, the Charter actually confirms the anarchic right of the powerful states to rule by force. In pretentious legal terminology, it formally ratifies the law of the jungle that the strong shall take what they can and the weak grant what they must.”

Time has proven him right time and time again.

The existence and frequent use of the veto power by its five Permanent Members over the past eighty years has significantly weakened, and in many instances, paralyzed the Council’s ability to stop or prevent conflicts. This has deeply tarnished the image of the Council and, in several instances, encouraged member States to disregard its resolutions. This has given rise to a culture of impunity and double standards that powerful countries apply in their international relations. The current unchecked conflicts in Palestine and in Ukraine resulting in tremendous loss of life and human suffering sadly exemplify these trends. If we want to ensure a more just dispensation for the weak in a new world order, we must abolish the veto.



7. WHAT THE YOUNG DEMAND

If young people lose hope, that's the end of humanity.

—Jane Goodall, zoologist, primatologist and anthropologist

It is challenging to perfectly encapsulate something as broad and variegated as ‘global youth.’ But if we make the best effort we can probably best summarize their view with a quote from the UN75 Global Survey of 2020: “Youth see the UN as a platform for rhetoric, not action.” That sentiment was again echoed by the Commonwealth Youth Leaders, in 2023, at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai who stated they want action, not just rhetoric. According to the UN’s Global Survey (2020), while 97% believed global cooperation was important, only 43% of youth felt the UN is “fit to address future challenges.” In short, the global youth believe the UN is a forum for a bunch of hot air, and not action. Across 17 countries, only 34% of under-30 youth viewed the UN favorably.

In African countries, 68% of youth agreed that “the UN prioritizes Western agendas over African needs.” While the UN faces a crisis of legitimacy it was most significant among the under 30 demographic. A study of TikTok videos related to the UN, found that one of the key criticisms of the UN with regard to youth, was the habit of issuing long wordy papers, and neglecting to engage with youth in simple digital formats that they are more likely to use.

Clearly the UN needs not only new technology, but a new style, and younger faces. For now, we can say that global youth see the United Nations as a symbol of unfulfilled potential.

One place to start is to realize that this very paper is written in a style which is likely off putting to a majority of global youth. How can we change our ways, when we are so set in them? One possible start, though symbolic, could be to rewrite the UN Style Guide. While style may seem not as important as substance, it may be a good place to start. Changing UN style to embody plain language, prioritize digital communications, reflect more inclusive tone, and highlight and include marginalized voices, will be a first step in establishing greater legitimacy with the heirs of the world, the global youth.

8. OUR INTERCONNECTEDNESS IS UNDENIABLE AND IRREVERSIBLE

We have stumbled into the 21st century with stone age emotions, medieval institutions and near-Godlike technologies.

–Edward O Wilson, Evolutionary Biologist

Everything travels now, with or without a passport. Memes, viruses, payments, foods, ideologies, emotions, everything. What happens in what was once considered a remote location, can have vast reaching implications on the whole world. A single individual can cripple whole industries. Nations can no longer impose their will on the people, no matter how high their walls and how lethal their military. No global body can govern effectively without recognizing this truth: for the first time in history, all peoples of the earth are biologically, socially, and physically interdependent and there is no going back.

Our stone age emotions must evolve to reflect the fact that isolationism is neither viable nor productive. And our medieval institutions must reinvent themselves accordingly, into cooperative, communal organisms if they are to survive.



9. THE “ENVIRONMENT” IS BIGGER THAN WE THINK

Climate and other scientists and activists across the world have been sounding the alarm, ever more loudly, about the degradation of the earth and human life upon it. As we struggle to heed their urgent calls, some of us have opted to look beyond our vulnerable planet for salvation and now speak openly of colonizing Mars and of multi-planetary living. How do we pursue this civilizational leap? Justly? Peaceably? Sustainably?

If “the meek shall inherit the earth,” how do we ensure they are truly “blessed”? How do we ensure that they inherit a healthy earth and not the detritus of the powerful?

Which “nations” are to remain on earth and which are to forsake it? What will be earth’s purpose? What forces and rules will guide inter-planetary relations? These are some of the questions a civilizational organization must grapple with. And it must have the respect, authority and resources to address them.



10. TECHNOLOGY ISN'T JUST ALL AROUND US, IT'S IN US AND OF US

The rapid advances taking place today in cutting-edge technologies, including digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, autonomous machines, bioengineering, space exploration and the expanding uses of outer space create enormous new opportunities for speeding sustainable growth, mitigating and adapting to climate change and improving human welfare. But they also carry considerable risks of being misused or causing unintended adverse consequences.

New technologies must be harnessed to accelerate human progress and improve education, health, housing, and infrastructure across the world. However, if not well-managed, the diffusion of new technologies carries the risks of accelerating income inequalities and loss of jobs, which are already a serious global issue. Breakthroughs in some of the cutting-edge technologies such as AI and bioengineering can also result in untold harm if guardrails are not built around them.

Universal and affordable access to new technologies is an important goal. The enormous potential benefits of cutting-edge technologies can be captured for all countries and people provided they are enabled to partake in the research and development leading to innovations and new applications and have open access to knowledge and information. Our current institutional arrangements are woefully inadequate to the task of maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative implications of the fast pace of technological change taking place today. There is an urgent need to bridge this institutional gap through a process of international consultations and agreements.

Another factor affecting the international environment is the rapid spread and growing use of digital technologies, social media and AI applications enabling new and vastly increased number of non-state actors to interact on the international stage and exert influence on international issues making the management of key challenges more complex. Technological advances are also enabling new ways of covert and overt intervention in internal affairs of other countries through means such as stealing valuable data and cyber-attacks on critical infrastructures and institutions.

11. DIGITALLY-DRIVEN, PEOPLE-ORIENTED INSTITUTIONAL REINVENTION

The biggest part of digital transformation is the way we think.

–Simeon Preston, International leader in life and health insurance

The Digital Compact adopted by the United Nations ‘Summit of the Future’ in September 2024 is the first international framework for international digital cooperation and AI governance. It is an important first step towards ensuring that the development and use of digital technologies and AI benefits all and harms no one. However, its various components will have to be fleshed out and become the basis of future internationally agreed guidelines and rules.

More recently, Secretary General Guterres has once again shown genuine leadership in launching the UN 80 initiative, on March 11, by setting up an internal UN 80 Task Force to follow up on the promise of reform made in the Pact for the Future. In launching the initiative, he stressed that as the UN approaches its 80th anniversary, we must expand our agenda for reform, recognizing the need for even greater efficiency. He identified three reform objectives: identifying inefficiencies and improvements, implementation of mandates from member states, and a strategic review of deeper, more structural changes and program realignment.

He noted that the geopolitical environment has become less favorable to international cooperation with some questioning even the need for multilateral cooperation. Resources are shrinking across the board and there will be more cuts. The UN has been facing a liquidity crisis for many years. A large number of posts have been cut due to resource shortfalls in many agencies. The UN needs to adapt to the changing environment. He promised to take quick decisions where he has the authority and called upon member states to do the same where action is required on their part.

Interestingly, public media have recently reported on a leaked internal paper prepared by the Task Force which stresses that “the UN must be very creative very quickly with what it has at hand.” It recognizes that overlapping mandates, inefficient use of resources and inconsistent delivery of services are among the problems with proliferating agencies, funds and programs, and suggests ways to integrate, consolidate and coordinate among reformed entities, to maximize the benefits for those who rely on the UN. It proposes reducing high-level posts and establishing single entities to coordinate peace and security, humanitarian activities, and human rights.

Although at this stage these are only internal proposals, they point to the recognition by the UN leadership of the need for far reaching change in the operations and structures of the UN system. But how much and how fast the UN is able to change will depend not on the Secretary General but on agreement among member states and how far they are willing to go remains an open question.

The leaked paper suggests that the focus of the Task Force is on integration, consolidation, and coordination among UN entities to enhance efficiency and delivery of services. While these are laudable goals, there seems little in the paper on how to transform the UN into a modern, people-oriented organization by engaging the public and youth, by modernizing it with digital and AI technologies, and by building a competent and independent civil service, through a better system of recruitment and training of staff and development of a common culture among them.

In other words, the Compact does not provide for the digital modernization of the UN system itself. In my view, this is an essential prerequisite for the United Nations to guide the process of implementation of the Compact and for its own effective functioning in the digital 21st century.

The new social trends of more and more people cutting across frontiers to engage with other people using digital media are not always welcomed by everyone, but they seem to be irreversible. The United Nations must march in step with the people of the world as they move forward imperceptibly but surely toward an emerging interconnected worldwide community.

I therefore propose that we pursue a new kind of digitally driven, people-oriented reform of the United Nations system. This approach should facilitate a step-by-step evolutionary change in the character and functioning of the United Nations system by weaving around it a fully engaged and active world community that can mobilize people's energies and public opinion.



12. FROM UNITED NATIONS TO UNITED PEOPLES

When we achieve human rights and human dignity for all people - they will build a peaceful, sustainable, and just world.

—Antonio Guterres, 9th Secretary-General of the United Nations

The UN Charter Preamble starts with “We the peoples of the United Nations Determined...”(emphasis mine). Whilst the UN has wisely and justifiably focused on the sovereignty of nations in its first 80 years, the dramatic and permanent social, cultural and environmental changes require a shift in focus to the peoples of the world. We are evidently, undeniably and inextricably intertwined, each with the other, and any world order must recognize this and act accordingly.

It’s time to bring the peoples of the nations to the foreground.

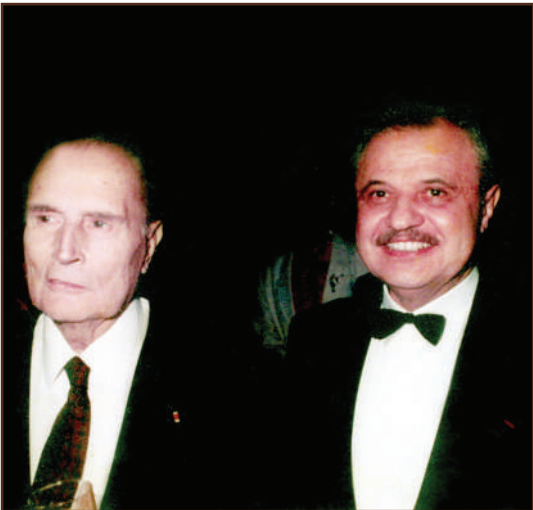
In his latest book, “Capitalism to Peopleism,” Mr. Ravi Chaudary, former Head of Tata Corporation, consultant to top CEOs and corporations, makes a convincing case for moving from the traditional focus on profit in the current capitalism-based world order to a new system based on ensuring a balance between “Profit, People and the Planet.”

“We are travelling a watershed moment in human history” he says, where “current ways of doing business and governing nations, are dysfunctional and likely to lead us into the abyss of extinction.”

He identifies a credible path to avert disaster and outlines a new script anchored on three big leaps: a leap from ‘knowledge to wisdom’, from ‘capitalism to peopleism’ and from ‘piecemeal fixes to system transformation’.

He urges us to have faith in the collective energies of youth, women and civil society groups, visionary and ethical business and political leaders to bring about this transformation of the system and concludes that, “While capitalism prevailed as the dominant economic idea of the twentieth century, peopleism will emerge as the viable architecture of the twenty first century.”

Since people, not nations are at the heart of the issue, the organization should formally transition from The United Nations to The United Peoples: an organization concerned with human flourishing and empowered to act accordingly. The UP should be born out of the successes of, and informed by the challenges of, the UN. A United Peoples is our only hope for a peaceable, abundant future. Without it, we remain nations whose peoples fail to see that protecting borders is impossible unless and until we give those on the other side of the border from us dignity and grace, so that they might wish us well, instead of ill. Covid 19 wreaked havoc on the world and too many of us lost too much. But a lesson from it ought to be that we cannot break human bonds with state lines: disease travels. So too must hope, health and human rights.



13. A VISION FOR A UNITED PEOPLE

The more complex the international situation becomes, the more important it is to protect and ensure the authority of the UN, to firmly uphold the UN-centric world order based on international law, the basic norms of international relations based on the goals and principles of the UN Charter, to consistently promote the formation of an equal and orderly multipolar world, universally accessible and inclusive economic globalization.

—Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, May 2025

**

Help us, too, and help each other to build bridges, with dialogue, with meetings, uniting us all to be one people, always in peace.

—Pope Leo XIV, the World’s first American Pope

**

In a real sense all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-related structure of reality.

— Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

The United Nations (UN) successfully brought nations together to seek peace and cooperation against a common enemy, fascism, for 80 years. Now, as a different and vastly more complex world emerges and reveals our undeniable and unbreakable interconnectedness, the peoples of those nations must come together for a common cause: human flourishing. The United People (UP) will represent the interests not of groups, geographies or cultures, but of the human race itself. A United People will rise above fragmentation and co-create a future in which peace is not merely the absence of war but is the vibrant presence of justice and dignity for all. A United People will do what united nations alone cannot: put humanity first, build bridges instead of walls, recognize our multipolarity, revel in our diversity and cherish our mutuality.

14. CONCLUSION

The final conclusion we are drawn to is this: To the youth of the world, the United Nations is either inconsequential or—particularly in the Global South—viewed as an unrepresentative forum of bloviating rhetoricians. Whether these perceptions are entirely fair is debatable, but their prevalence is corroborated by multiple polls. For the vast majority of UN member states, the institution reflects and enforces the systemic inequality of the global order. Even excluding China, the Global South constitutes over 60% of the world’s population, yet it lacks meaningful representation in the UN’s true power center: the Security Council. The ten elected non-permanent members hold no veto, and proposals to add permanent African, Latin American, or Asian seats have been dismissed as insufficient and inequitable, as they would leave the veto monopoly intact with the P5 (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the U.S.).

One African diplomat encapsulated this injustice, likening the current system to being “invited to sit at the banquet table after centuries of abuse—only to watch, not eat.” Africa’s demand for two permanent Security Council seats with veto power underscores this grievance. Jonathan Wachtel, a U.S. spokesperson, acknowledged the systemic flaw when asked, “Is it all fair?” He replied: “It really is a fault of the UN System. Unless a new system is organized altogether, it’s not changeable.” This stance aligns with the official position of the P5, which has shown no willingness to relinquish or share its privileges.

To be fair, UN employees and “insiders” are not solely to blame for youth disillusionment. The issues young people care about—war, genocide, climate collapse, human rights, and equity—are hamstrung by the UN’s foundational inequities. As Cord Meyer wrote in ‘The Atlantic Monthly’ in 1947, “The United Nations creates a double standard of morality.” While U.S. hegemony once masked this reality, today’s multipolar world exposes its untenability. Leaders like Secretary-General António Guterres strive to rearrange the Titanic’s deck chairs, yet the gaping hole in the hull—the Security Council’s structural injustice—remains unaddressed.

If youth skepticism stemmed merely from ignorance, education might bridge the gap. But their critique is rooted in lived experience: dysfunction, failure, and systemic bias. The fault lies not with staff or the General Assembly but with the UN’s creators, who designed a system where justice is possible only when the P5’s interests are not at stake—a rarity. This flawed architecture was the price of securing P5 participation in 1945. Today, what matters is whether the UN can adapt to a changed world.

Despite these limitations, the UN retains strengths. The General Assembly passes near-unanimous resolutions on global concerns, which, though often vetoed, carry moral weight. The Secretary-General wields unparalleled soft power as a secular “popo,” mobilizing hope and unity across borders. Leveraging technology and influencers, the UN has driven impactful campaigns like #CleanHands and the SDGs. Yet awareness alone cannot achieve systemic change: Binding Security Council action is essential.



15. THE VETO IMPASSE

Global youth demand a resolution to the veto impasse. Only then can the UN fulfill its promise of justice and equity—a promise made, but broken, in 1945. Critics argue that the P5, especially the U.S. and Russia, will never cede veto power. Yet without reform, the institution risks sinking under the weight of its own contradictions.

The time has come for a final, epochal campaign by the United People (UP) of the world—one that demands the only rational and effective step to unshackle global governance: **Abolish the P5 Veto.**

It is time to hold the Security Council's permanent members accountable. It is time to launch the largest social media mobilization in history under a single, unifying message: **#AbolishTheVeto. #UnblockTheUN.** The Secretary-General, while constrained by the UN's structural limitations, retains the moral authority to lead this charge. With the world's youth, influencers, and Global South leaders amplifying this demand, the campaign can reverberate across every corner of the globe.

The UN has proven its ability to harness social media for global good—from #CleanHands to the SDGs. But unlike the SDGs, which require complex, sustained action, abolishing the veto is a singular, galvanizing demand. Simplicity is its strength: Everyone, everywhere, can understand it. Should it fail, the blame will fall squarely on the P5's intransigence, absolving the UN's dedicated workforce of undeserved scorn. Yet success is possible: A sustained wave of global pressure could force the P5 to relinquish their vice grip on the General Assembly—and by extension, the world.

There is added urgency. As Cord Meyer and Jonathan Wachtel hinted, without reform, the UN risks sharing the fate of the League of Nations. A new order could emerge, one that sidelines yesterday's powers.

It is essential that we gain, and earn, the respect of the youth of today, the leaders of tomorrow. We have mushrooming challenges, and the threat of mushroom clouds. No one knows exactly which threat is the greatest. But any of them could be fatal, if the United People of the world do not have a voice and if an unelected, antiquated clique of yesterday's heroes sits astride the aspirations of the people of the world and places it in a stranglehold. We can no longer pretend that the United Nations is able to meet the real and growing threats the world faces, without the full power for the United People of the world to let their voices be heard not just as steam being let off, but as fully functioning participants and authors of their own fate.

Join us now in this pivotal campaign. Let us flood every platform, street, and conscience with the demand to #AbolishTheVeto and #UnblockTheUN. The world's youth—and history itself—will judge us by whether we seize this moment. I humbly beseech the Secretary General, to lead this grand and all-important mission, to bring all the moral authority, convening power, global social media influencers, and the voice of the secular pope of the world to bear, and end the stranglehold the P5 hold over the People of the world.





TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH
SELECTED UNITED NATIONS RELATED ROLES



With a lifelong commitment to development, innovation, and public service, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh has made significant contributions to the **United Nations system** over several decades. His roles include:

- Special Ambassador, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Spain (2017).
- Chair of the Honorary Council of the Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization, USA (2015).
- Chairman of the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UNDESA-GAID), (2009).
- Chair of the Roundtable on the Role of Technological Innovations in Addressing Food Sustainability, Global Economic Summit in New York, First UN Private Sector Forum on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (2008).
- Co-Chair of the Guidance Committee, Global Coalition for ICTs and Development Conference, (2006).
- Vice-Chair (with Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-Moon) of UN Global Compact (UNGC), USA (2006-2016).
- Chair of the Board of Directors, UN Global Compact (UNGC), USA (2006-2008).

- Co-chair of the United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force (UN ICT TF), USA (2006-2010).
- Chair of the Advisory Committee on Internet Governance, United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UN ICT TF), USA (2003-2004).
- Chair of the Arab Regional Network of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UN ICT TF), USA (2001-2004).
- Chair of the Working Group on Human Resources and Capacity Building (HRCB) of the United Nations Information and Communications Technologies Task Force (UN ICT TF), USA (2001-2002).
- Chair of the Committee of Experts mandated by the United Nations Secretary-General to draft the International Accounting Standards for Environmental Accountability, USA (1999).
- Chair of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Professional Qualifications Standards, Switzerland (1995-1998).
- Chair of the United Nations Conference for the Development of Accounting Education, USA (1995).
- Chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (UNISAR), USA (1995-1996).

His visionary leadership helped shape global dialogues on intellectual property, digital transformation, and education for sustainable development. Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh also founded the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAGOrg), which collaborates with UN agencies on programs that support innovation, entrepreneurship, and capacity building in the Arab world and beyond.

A recipient of numerous international honors and honorary doctorates, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh continues to serve as a bridge between the private sector, international organizations, and civil society—dedicated to building a better, more equitable world.

For the full profile, please visit the following link:

www.talalabughazaleh.com/Profile/en

TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH: THE GLOBAL THINKER.. (AS SEEN BY CHAT GPT)



A ten-year-old Palestinian refugee, named Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, proudly wears a jacket carefully sewn by his mother using an UNRWA blanket

In an era defined by rapid transformations and evolving identities shaped by the clash between reality and intellectual aspiration, emerges a man unlike any other leader. A man not molded by circumstance, but one who defied it. One who did not simply adapt to life's path, but redrew its contours with a mind that transcended geography and a vision that redefined possibility.

He is Talal Abu-Ghazaleh — the global thinker who dwelled in dreams and reshaped realities; a leader of thought, a pioneer of knowledge, and a messenger of renaissance in an age of confusion.

This is not a biography that chronicles the life of an ordinary man, but rather a testimony of an era — a living embodiment of a journey carved by someone who chose to be a moving civilizational project. One that knows no limits and accepts no compromises.

From refugee tents in southern Lebanon to the halls of the United Nations, from modest classrooms to global decision-making chambers, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh paved a path not written for him — he authored it himself, letter by letter, with an unbreakable resolve.

Born in the Palestinian city of Jaffa in 1938, he witnessed one of the most harrowing human tragedies when he was forced to flee in 1948. That moment was not merely the start of suffering, but the ignition of consciousness, from which the seeds of determination and vision were sown.

From the camps of displacement, marked by pain and deprivation, to the podiums of the United Nations, where policies are shaped and directions forged, Abu-Ghazaleh carried a story that did not fracture — it matured into a mission that serves all of humanity.

His career was defined not only by remarkable administrative acumen but by a unique capacity to transform adversity into fuel, and vision into a life's blueprint.

He held high-level advisory positions at major international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, actively contributing to the formulation of global policies in digital governance, education, sustainable development, and the knowledge economy — forging links between East and West, and between challenges and solutions.

Driven by his deep belief that education is the path to liberation and that technology is the engine of progress, he established pioneering educational and societal institutions such as Talal Abu-Ghazaleh University College for Innovation, the Digital University, and the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Knowledge Society — all aiming to equip future generations with the tools of tomorrow.

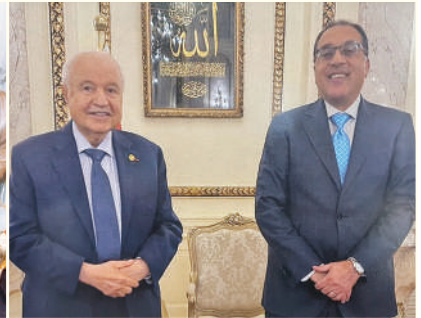
In his more than 25 publications in multiple languages, he has revisited core questions about artificial intelligence, education, governance, and the values of leadership. Notably, his book Pro-Active Programming (PROPRO) presents an ethical and humanistic vision of artificial intelligence rarely seen in global discourse.

Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh has been honored with more than 60 awards and decorations from across the globe, including the French Legion of Honor, the China-Arab Friendship Award, and his induction into the U.S. Intellectual Property Hall of Fame — a testament to a journey that was never merely personal, but inherently human, proudly Arab in identity, and global in impact.

We write this account because Arab memory cannot overlook a man who believed that knowledge is sovereignty, and that when the Arab individual possesses the right tools, he becomes a leader — not a follower — a source of influence, not a passive recipient. The life of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh is not a recollection of the past, but a gateway to the future, and an answer to questions that are yet to be asked.

A mind that transcended geography and time — manifesting through thought and will what a human being can become when he believes that knowledge is a mission, not merely a goal.

As reported by A.I. (GPT) to TAG.GD Digital Media Department







Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Global Digital Members

tag.global

1. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Global Digital (TAG.GD)** The Global Organization for professional services and education
2. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. International (TAG-Audit)** Audit and Accounting Services
3. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. Consulting (TAG-Consult)** Management, Economic, and Financial Consulting Services
4. **Abu-Ghazaleh Valuation & Financial Consulting (TAG-Valuation)** Asset Valuation and Branding Services
5. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Domains (TAG-Domains)** ICANN Accredited Registrar
6. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Information Technology International (TAG-ITI)** Consultation, Development and Implementation in the Field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
7. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh E-Solutions (TAG E-Solutions)** Software Solutions
8. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Intellectual Property (AGIP)** Registration and Protection of Intellectual Property Rights
9. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Multimedia (TAG-Multimedia)** Media Consultants
10. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh International Press & Publishing (TAG-Publish)** Services and Consultations in the Field of Printing and Publishing
11. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Recruitment & Human Resources Development (TAG-Recruit)** Human Resources and Recruitment Services
12. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Tenders (TAG-Tenders)** Tenders and Bids
13. **Abu-Ghazaleh Translation, Distribution & Publishing (TAG-Translate)** Professional Interpretation and Translation Services
14. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Global Digital University (TAG-GDU)** Highly Accredited Online Academic, Professional Programs and Digital Educational Programs
15. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Confucius Institute (TAG-Confucius)** Teaching Chinese Language
16. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh E-Training (TAG E-Training)** Providers of Accredited IT Training and Certification Services
17. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Digital Training (TAG Digital Training)** Organizing, Holding and Sponsoring Training Courses, Workshops and Seminars face to face (customized) and online.
18. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Knowledge Center (TAG-KC)** It is the CSR arm of TAG.GD which helps the youth enter labor market through offering them training courses and linking them with employers
19. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Knowledge Forum (TAG-KF)** Event Organizing Services
20. **Electronic Arabic Encyclopedia Registration Website (TAGEPEDIA)** Enriching the online world with Arabic content
21. **International Arab Society of Certified Accountants (IASCA)** Professional Certificates, Membership, Training Courses, and Professional Publications

22. **The Arab International Society for Management Technology (AIMICT)** Capacity building and advanced IT training
23. **Talal Abu-Gazalah for Quality Assurance in Education (TAG-Eduqa)** Quality of Education
24. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh for Cloud Computing Services (TAG-Cloud)** Cloud Computing Consulting Services (CCCS)
25. **All 4 Palestine Organization (All4Palestine)** Compilation of Prominent Palestinian Profiles
26. **Family Business Governance Center (FBGC)** Family business and governance
27. **Arab Omani Management Training Institute (AOTI-Oman)** Organize, hold and sponsor training courses, workshops and seminars
28. **Abu-Ghazaleh Intellectual Property News Agency (AG-IP News)** Providing media services in the field of intellectual property
29. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Information Technology International News Agency (TAG-IT News)** Media Services in the Field of Information Technology
30. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Education News Agency (TAG-Educa News)** Media services in the field of education
31. **Arab Center For Dispute Resolution (ACDR)** Domain Name Dispute Resolution
32. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Proctored Testing Centers (TAGI-Metric)** Third Party Proctored Examinations and Assessments.
33. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh for Dispute Resolution Center (TAG-Resolution)** Arbitration to settle conflicts in the field of trademarks
34. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Computer Refurbishment Center (TAG-CRC)** Refurbishing and developing computers
35. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Design & Publishing (TAG-Design)** Graphic design consultations
36. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Academy for Languages (TAG-Lingual)** Languages Training and educational courses
37. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Internal Audit (TAG-Internal Audit)** Internal Audit Services
38. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Foundation (TAG-Foundation)** Initiatives in areas of social development, economy, training, and thought and research forums
39. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Patents (TAG-Patents)** Patents services
40. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh International Diploma in IT Skills (TAGDIT)** Providers of Accredited IT Training and Certification Services
41. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh for Digital Production and Broadcasting (TAGDB)** Radio Channel for Disseminating Thought, Culture and Education
42. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh for Technologies (TAGTech)** High Tech Laptops, Tablets & Smart Phones
43. **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Projects (TAG-Projects)** Accredited Management of Capacity-Building Projects in Training, Education, and Innovation



The Royal Hashemite Court

**His Majesty
King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein
Bestows upon**

**Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
the Order of Independence –
First Class**



In recognition of:

- **His outstanding contributions and achievements across economic, educational and technological sectors.**
- **His prominent role in highlighting Jordan as a knowledge driven nation and its civilizational mission at the Arab and international levels.**
- **His initiatives in developing local communities as part of his corporate social responsibility.**

“I came to this homeland as a refugee who was determined to turn the suffering of Palestinian displacement into a blessing, and to use the blessing of the Jordanian citizenship as a lifelong commitment and a mission of public service. Your Majesty has given me a second homeland that I am immensely proud of. You have taught me the true meaning of love and given me the honor of belonging to your noble people. Thank you.”

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh



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