

The Elders condemn violence in Côte d'Ivoire, call for accountability

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The Elders condemn the violence and grave violations of human rights perpetrated during the fighting in Côte d'Ivoire. They are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life that is taking place despite warnings for months that the country was on the brink of civil war.

Former President Laurent Gbagbo must bear primary responsibility for the violence, which was sparked by his refusal to accept the election results and step down. His term is over and he must depart the political stage.

Meanwhile, former President Gbagbo and President Alassane Ouattara both bear responsibility for the actions of forces under their control. They must demand an immediate end to attacks on civilians and UN personnel.

Elders' Chair, Archbishop Desmond Tutu said: "I urge President Ouattara to commit publicly to a process of accountability. His actions and words in the coming days are critical to the future of Côte d'Ivoire. The people need reconciliation, not retaliation. They need a leader who can bring peace and put the country back on the path to prosperity. He can do this by demonstrating that he will govern for all Ivoirians, and is worthy of the trust placed in him through the elections."

Kofi Annan said: "The violence must stop and the atrocities and human rights abuses must be investigated. Those who have perpetrated these terrible crimes, in Duékoué and elsewhere, must be held accountable. There is only one Côte d'Ivoire and the leaders and the people must understand that. They have no option but to reconcile, heal and live together. This will be a difficult process, but the country needs to find a path to national unity."

The Elders are deeply worried about the poor donor response to the humanitarian crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Hundreds of people have been killed and the death toll is rising following news of mass killings in the western town of Duékoué. UN officials say an estimated 500,000 people have left Abidjan alone, with one million displaced across the country. One hundred and sixty thousand people have fled to neighbouring Liberia, putting enormous strain on border communities.

Graça Machel said: "International attention has been stretched by other crises but it must now focus on this rapidly deteriorating situation in Côte d'Ivoire. The people first of all need protection, but they also urgently need water, food and medical supplies. Aid pledges need to

be stepped up – and met. And in the longer term, the international community should prepare to support Côte d’Ivoire in a reconciliation process that will require time, patience and resources.”

ABOUT THE ELDERS

The Elders are an independent group of global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace-building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity. The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

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