

The Elders congratulate the Egyptian people on peaceful elections

Transfer of power from military to civilian rule should take place as soon as possible

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PRESS RELEASE

As Egypt's People's Assembly prepares to hold its first session on Monday 23 January 2012, the Elders congratulate the Egyptian people on the peaceful elections for the lower house of parliament. This is an important first step in a complex political process that will take months, if not years, to complete.

"These were the first genuinely free polls in the country's history," said former US President **Jimmy Carter**. "They are a tribute to the people's maturity and desire to participate in rebuilding Egypt."

"Despite late changes to the electoral system, which created much voter confusion, the six-week long process passed off remarkably smoothly and peacefully. There can be little doubt that the results reflect the popular will. Only minor irregularities that do not change the overall picture were reported and I hope will be addressed ahead of the elections for the Shura Council (upper house) in the coming weeks."

The Elders hope that all relevant parties will work together so that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which assumed control following the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak almost a year ago, will meet its declared commitment to transfer power to civilian rule as soon as possible.

"A central principle of all democracies is the subordination of the national armed forces to the authority of elected civilians", said **Mary Robinson**, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Egypt is no exception. We hope that the next steps will be accomplished in a time frame that will allow elections for the presidency to go ahead by the end of June, as promised."

In line with international human rights law, and to help heal the wounds of the past 12 months, the Elders believe that the release of all those held extra-judicially or detained on political grounds would be a wise act. During the past year, as many as 20,000 protestors are reported to have been detained by the military. Some have been sentenced to draconian prison terms by military courts for the exercise of their right to free expression.

“All trials of civilians before military courts must halt immediately,” **Mary Robinson** added.

The primary task of the newly elected parliament is to select a constitutional drafting committee. The Egyptian people should expect their representatives to ensure that those selected share a vision of a new Egypt that will act as a beacon of democracy and respect for human rights in the region.

Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, said: “The drafting of the new constitution will define the future of Egypt. This should be a genuinely inclusive and consultative process. The views and interests of all sectors of society need to be taken into account, especially those of women and young people, who have been in the vanguard of the demonstrations for democracy.”

About The Elders

The Elders are independent global leaders working together for peace and human rights. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

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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