

**The Elders call for an immediate halt to violence in Syria
A humanitarian pause is urgently required**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders are appalled by the bloodshed and human suffering in Syria that has cost more than 7,500 lives over the past year. They support calls for an immediate halt to the violence. They also urge a “humanitarian pause” to take hold, to permit access to those in need.

Over recent days, thousands of people, including children and women, have been trapped in their homes by fighting. In the city of Homs, hundreds of civilians have been killed in the past few weeks in indiscriminate shelling of residential areas by government forces.

A humanitarian pause would allow the delivery of assistance to those populations in dire need of medical assistance and basic supplies. Food, water and other essentials of life should never be used as instruments of conflict.

The Syrian government, which bears primary responsibility for the lives of citizens, must halt its military assault and allow medical and humanitarian agencies to carry out their work in safety and without interference. These organisations should be granted unconditional access to all those who require help.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders said:

“I wish to express my outrage and anguish at the terrible loss of life and suffering taking place in Syria. My fellow Elders and I express our sympathy for the victims and call for an immediate halt to the violence.

“The Syrian people are entitled to democracy, liberty and equal rights for all.

“I urge all Syrians to reflect deeply on the situation of their country and the lessons learned from the bitter civil wars in neighbouring Iraq and Lebanon. Dialogue, however difficult, is the only way to work towards a lasting peace for all the country’s communities.”

The Elders warmly welcome the appointment of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis.

In light of his new appointment, Kofi Annan has [temporarily recused himself](#) as a member of The Elders with immediate effect. The Elders accept his decision and wish him every success in carrying out the important mandate with which he is entrusted.

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](#), [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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