

## The Elders welcome UN Secretary-General's commitment to fight sexual exploitation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders welcomed the commitment from the new Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres to personally lead efforts to eradicate sexual abuse and exploitation by UN peacekeepers and civilian staff.

Sexual abuse and exploitation of vulnerable women and children by United Nations personnel is a betrayal of trust and an assault of the victims' human rights and dignity. The initiative by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Jane Holl Lute, to place victims at the centre of the UN's strategy is a positive development.

The Elders specifically welcomed the planned appointment of a Victims Rights Advocate within the UN system, and similar positions within peacekeeping deployments where serious incidents of abuse and exploitation have been reported. They also noted with approval the plans to end impunity for abusers through greater accountability, and to press troop-contributing countries to investigate and prosecute offenders.

[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), Elder and former UN diplomat, said:

*"Peacekeeping is a vital part of the work of the United Nations, but the disgraceful behaviour of some troops and other personnel is a stain on the organisation's conscience. I am encouraged by the leadership shown by the new Secretary-General to tackle these crimes and end impunity, and hope all parts of the UN follow his example."*

[Hina Jilani](#), Elder and human rights defender, added:

*"The UN exists to defend human rights and dignity. It is offensive and unacceptable that any abusers within its own ranks are not held accountable for their actions. This damages the credibility of peacekeeping operations and the organisation as a whole. The new measures proposed in this report are a vital step to preventing further crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation."*

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## About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Kofi Annan](#) (Chair), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) (Deputy Chair), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

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