

## Moral outrage, political failure: The Elders deplore new famines

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders expressed their great concern about the famines now threatening South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. This catastrophic situation is a damning symptom of political failure by national leaders and the international community, they said today.

Each of these country situations is different and driven by a mix of short and long-term factors, from war and terrorism to the impact of climate change and population displacement, but all are avoidable.

Leaders in South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen are putting their people at enormous risk by failing to end the conflicts that are ravaging their countries. These leaders and the international community should take immediate steps to ensure urgent assistance is provided to the most vulnerable people who face starvation.

[Kofi Annan](#), Chair of The Elders, said:

*“It is a moral outrage that people are dying from hunger in a world of plenty. Leaders have failed and ordinary men, women and children are paying a dreadful price. Urgent action is needed to deliver life-saving aid and, just as importantly, to address the root causes of the conflicts and disruptions that have created this dire situation.”*

The Elders welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in drawing attention to the suffering and for pressing UN member states to adequately fund humanitarian operations.

Humanitarian actors must have full and unimpeded access to victims of famine, and must work to ensure that those forced from their homes are able to return as soon as possible.

[Mary Robinson](#), Elder and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

*“These famines are an affront to our common humanity. They are the product of political neglect and a callous disregard for human life from the leaders entrusted with a responsibility to protect their people. This is no time for the international community, and particularly the*

*world's richest countries, to step away from their commitments to overseas aid, support for UN peacekeeping, or safeguarding universal rights and values.”*

The Elders urged the international community, and particularly the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, to commit substantial resources to the humanitarian relief efforts, and also to use their political influence to ensure leaders in the countries concerned fulfil their responsibilities towards their own peoples.

They voiced particular concern that in South Sudan, the government's military operations are directly contributing to famine by destroying homes and livelihoods. This is compounded by the brazen obstruction of humanitarian access, exacerbated by the unacceptable increase in visa fees for aid workers.

In the case of Yemen, the P5 members bear a special responsibility to restrict the arms sales that are fuelling the conflict. The Elders urged the leaders of those countries that are directly involved in the conflict to strictly abide by international humanitarian law, refrain from targeting civilians and lift the siege of Yemen's main port so food can be freely imported and distributed.

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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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