

The Elders condemn US withdrawal from UN Human Rights Council

LONDON, 21 June 2018

The Elders today condemned the decision of the United States to withdraw from the United Nations Human Rights Council as an alarming act of isolationism that will make it harder to defend the rights and dignity of vulnerable people worldwide.

[Kofi Annan](#), Chair of The Elders and former UN Secretary-General, said:

“The Human Rights Council is an integral part of the international system that helps protect fundamental rights and values. I deplore the US withdrawal, which stands at odds with its historic traditions and sends a signal to others that they too can ignore the Council.”

The Elders were particularly concerned that the US decision to leave the Council follows a series of similar isolationist measures by President Donald Trump, including withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change, the UN Global Compact on Migration, and the Iran nuclear deal.

They said that the timing of the decision is particularly troubling when human rights are under attack from so many different quarters worldwide. For all its imperfections, the Council offers a platform to challenge impunity and hold countries to account. Withdrawal will act against the US’ own interests by ceding space to other states, they warned.

Furthermore, the plight of vulnerable migrants and refugees, from detained children separated from their parents at the US/Mexican border to those seeking safe harbour in the Mediterranean and displaced Rohingya communities in Bangladesh, underscores the need for robust international processes and mechanisms to affirm universal rights.

[Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), Deputy Chair of The Elders and former Prime Minister of Norway, said:

“Global challenges require multilateral solutions. The United States has historically recognised this, and seen itself as a leading light on human rights since Eleanor Roosevelt helped draft the Universal Declaration 70 years ago. I hope the many committed human rights defenders in the US will now fight hard so this retrograde step proves short-lived.”

ENDS

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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), [Ban Ki-moon](#), [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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