

The Elders call for restraint and justice in Zimbabwe to honour Kofi Annan's legacy

LONDON, 23 August 2018

The Elders today urged Zimbabweans at every level in society to uphold the democratic rights to justice and peaceful protest, and refrain from words or actions that could incite violence, drawing on the counsel of their late Chair, **Kofi Annan** (1938-2018).

Ahead of the ruling by Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court on the petition filed by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change Alliance regarding the 30 July election result, The Elders called on political leaders to act responsibly to avert further bloodshed.

They recalled the words of Kofi Annan, who visited the country in July with his fellow Elders **Mary Robinson** and **Lakhdar Brahimi**, with the support of the Kofi Annan Foundation, that *"nothing other than the democratic will of the people should be allowed to determine the future of Zimbabwe."*

Meaningful democracy is not only about free and fair elections, but also accountability for those in positions of authority, freedom of expression and assembly, respect for human and civil rights, and a clear separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary.

The Elders reiterated their strong condemnation of the violence that erupted in Harare on 1 August leaving six people dead. The Government of Zimbabwe and the security forces have the primary responsibility for maintaining peace in a professional and accountable manner that strengthens civilian authority.

It is essential that the independent investigation ordered by President Emmerson Mnangagwa proceeds with integrity and holds accountable those found to bear responsibility for the tragic events of 1 August. An independent inquiry should also scrutinise other incidents of post-election violence and rights violations across Zimbabwe.

As Kofi Annan said at the conclusion of his July visit, *"it is critical that everyone acts responsibly before, during and after the elections to ensure a Zimbabwe free from violence, where human rights are respected and prosperity restored."*

The Elders expressed their gratitude for the generous tributes paid to Kofi Annan by Zimbabwean civil society and both President Mnangagwa and the MDC Alliance presidential candidate Nelson Chamisa.

The best way for both leaders to honour his legacy and the aspiration of the people of Zimbabwe for a brighter future for all, is to abjure violence, intimidation and incitement, and instead promote dialogue and magnanimity as a path to inclusive national reconciliation, cohesion and development.

The Elders also reaffirmed their solidarity with civil society groups in Zimbabwe determined to bridge social fractures, and supported their calls for a new political settlement that delivers lasting social and economic justice alongside political freedom.

In all his meetings in Zimbabwe, Kofi Annan repeatedly emphasised that the country had to move forward, tapping the great potential of its people and rejecting the damaging practices and policies of past leaders.

Today this call is more acute than ever. The Elders share their dear and deeply-mourned friend's "*stubborn optimism*" that a better future awaits Zimbabwe, and will do all they can to help its advent.

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](#) (1938-2018), [Ban Ki-moon](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) (Acting 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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