

The Elders warn Yemen famine will be worsened by US designation of Houthis as terrorists

LONDON, 15 January 2021

The Elders today expressed concern that the severe famine and humanitarian crisis in Yemen will be worsened by the US Government's designation of one of the parties in the conflict as terrorists.

Due to enter into force on 19 January, just one day before the Trump Administration's term in office ends, this designation will severely impact the lives of Yemenis, and all commercial trade with the country.

This US action will punish the whole of the Yemeni population, raising the prospect of mass famine and significant loss of life, and possibly make a future diplomatic solution even more difficult, the Elders warned. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world and exacerbating this situation will increase instability in an already fractured and fractious region.

[Ban Ki-moon](#), former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of The Elders, said:

"I am deeply worried by this action, especially its timing. It is likely to be counter-productive to the goal we should now all be focusing our energies on: ending this disastrous war as soon as possible and protecting the lives of the Yemeni people. I fear that this move may make the Houthis even less inclined to engage with the international community."

The Elders expressed their hope that the incoming Biden Administration will make ending the war a high priority and give renewed support to talks led by UN special envoy Martin Griffiths.

[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), founding member of The Elders and veteran UN peace negotiator, added:

"For far too long, the Yemeni people have been innocent victims of the poor governance of their country, which has been used as a cockpit for proxy wars by external powers. President-elect Joe Biden is likely to undertake a comprehensive review of the foreign policy of the outgoing Administration, especially in the Middle East. Secretary Pompeo's decision on the Houthis makes the case of Yemen an urgent necessity. At the same time, the UN Security Council should

urgently require all sides in Yemen to put down their arms and take part in unconditional peace talks under UN auspices.”

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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 [Ban Ki-moon](#) (Deputy Chair), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Zeid Raad Al Hussein](#), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#) (Deputy Chair), [Juan Manuel Santos](#), [Mary Robinson](#) (Chair) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

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

[Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chair from 2013 to 2018.

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