

The Elders call for UN unity and leadership on Afghanistan after Taliban takeover

LONDON, 17 August 2021

The Elders today called on the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to lead the international community's efforts to encourage a peaceful transition and protection of human rights of all Afghans, following the military takeover of Kabul by the Taliban.

A major humanitarian effort is now required to address the devastating impact that violent conflict has had on Afghan communities, and to contain the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent further spread within the country and region. To enable these efforts, the Taliban must guarantee the UN and other humanitarian agencies unfettered, non-discriminatory access to all communities, including internally displaced people, in line with its obligations under international law.

Two decades after the US-led invasion, regional and world leaders should ensure that all those wishing to leave Afghanistan to seek international protection have safe means to do so. States which had previously been returning Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers to regions of the country deemed "safe" should immediately suspend such removals.

[Mary Robinson](#), Chair of The Elders and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

"The UN Security Council must fulfil its responsibility under the UN Charter and take a unified, strong position in support of a peaceful transition that paves for the way for stability in Afghanistan. The UN Secretary-General should personally lead the UN's efforts, including to provide humanitarian assistance and safeguard the rights of all vulnerable Afghans, particularly women and girls. The people of Afghanistan have already suffered incalculable harm from decades of conflict and oppression – the world cannot turn its back now."

Following decades of violent conflict and suffering, the people of Afghanistan need an inclusive government that establishes conditions whereby all Afghans can live in peace, security and dignity together.

A sustained peace requires a political settlement that values Afghanistan's ethnic and sectarian diversity, and recognises that legitimacy cannot be acquired through the force of arms. Without this, further cycles of resistance and violent conflict are inevitable.

ENDS

Media enquiries

William French, Head of Communications

T: +44 7795 693903

media@theElders.org

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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 \(Deputy Chair\)](#), [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](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [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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