

The Elders stress neutrality on Ukraine cannot be an option following Kyiv visit

RZESZÓW, Poland, 17 August 2022

The Elders call for increased international support for Ukraine and stress that neutrality is not a moral option in the face of continued Russian aggression.

Upon their return from Kyiv, Elders **Ban Ki-moon** and **Juan Manuel Santos** urged the Ukrainian government to make its case for support in capitals all around the world. Public solidarity from governments, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, is essential to keep the world's attention on Ukraine's struggle and bring about an eventual end to Russia's war.

The Elders met President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other senior government figures in Kyiv on Tuesday, 16 August, after visiting the sites of atrocities committed by Russian forces.

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

"Our visit to Bucha and Irpin left us in no doubt as to the appalling suffering Russia is inflicting on the Ukrainian people, and we condemn in the strongest terms the actions of Russian forces at these sites and elsewhere."

The Elders reiterate their belief that Russia's war on Ukraine is a moral outrage. They call on the world to strongly resist the normalisation of the war's horror and injustice and do everything possible to help end Russian aggression.

The Ukrainian government's request for security guarantees that go beyond the failed assurances of the past deserves serious consideration.

The Elders also emphasise the central role of the UN itself, pointing to the initial success of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the possibility of UN engagement on nuclear safety concerns at the Zaporizhzhia power plant.

[Juan Manuel Santos](#), former President of Colombia and Nobel Peace Laureate, said:

“It is vital that the 16 million Ukrainian people in need get access to humanitarian assistance, particularly those living in areas not controlled by the Government. The victims of this terrible aggression cannot be ignored. Ukraine also needs sustained financial support to aid reconstruction and recovery.

As Elders we are focused on ending and preventing wars, not winning them - our priority is to keep the flame of peace alive. I know from my own experience in Colombia that conflicts and their resolution are unpredictable, but the principle of a just and enduring peace cannot be forgotten. Ukrainians must know people all over the world stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their struggle to determine their own future.”

[Ban Ki-moon](#) added:

“The case for international solidarity with Ukraine needs to be made beyond NATO countries. As Elders from Latin America and Asia, Juan Manuel Santos and I visited Kyiv to emphasise that support for Ukraine comes from all over the world. Ukraine’s fight matters to every country that values its own sovereignty. Neutrality in the face of aggression cannot be an option.”

ENDS

Media enquiries

Luke Upchurch, Director of Communications
T: +44 7741742064
media@theElders.org

Sign up to [receive The Elders' press releases](#).

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](#) and [Jimmy Carter](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Desmond Tutu](#) (1931-2021) and [Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chairs from 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to 2018 respectively.

Find out more

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to www.theElders.org.

Follow The Elders on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).