

The Elders urge the Presidents of Sudan and South Sudan to return to the negotiating table

Only dialogue can avoid another humanitarian catastrophe

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As Sudan and South Sudan teeter on the brink of war again, The Elders urge President Omar Al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir to cease military escalation and return to the negotiating table immediately and without preconditions. The Elders are deeply worried by the impact of recent fighting, including cross-border ground military activities and aerial bombardments, on civilians.

Last July, the world welcomed South Sudan as the world's youngest nation. The Elders acknowledge the role of Presidents Bashir and Kiir in this historic achievement after decades of civil war. The Elders have urged both heads of state to live up to the vision of lasting peace in the region and put the safety and wellbeing of their citizens first.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said:

"We have watched recent clashes along the border with a heavy heart. The terrible lessons of war seem to have been forgotten already. Again we are seeing military solutions being pursued which can only lead to death, destruction and suffering.

As Elders, we know only too well the difficult compromises needed for the sake of peace. We profoundly believe in meaningful dialogue as the only way forward for a peaceful, stable and prosperous future for Sudan and South Sudan."

The Elders also advise the two Presidents that continued military confrontation would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences and would further restrict access to civilians in need.

About 45,000 civilians have been displaced by recent fighting near the border between Sudan and South Sudan. In Abyei and neighbouring areas, more than 100,000 displaced persons have not yet returned because of the continued presence of armed forces. In the Sudanese states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, an estimated 300,000 people have been prevented from planting crops because of fighting and bombardment. With the start of the rainy season and large numbers of people short of food, urgent access is needed to deliver aid before roads become impassable.

The Elders call on all parties to the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile to grant immediate and unconditional humanitarian access to all civilians in need, in line with the joint proposal put forward by the African Union, the Arab League and the United Nations.

The Elders believe that the possibility of a strong and mutually beneficial relationship between Sudan and South Sudan still exists, and encourage the leaders of both countries to rebuild the relations reflected in the deep and inter-connected histories of their peoples. A first step should be the rescheduling of the summit scheduled between the two leaders in Juba on 3 April.

Archbishop Tutu said:

“Military escalation will only take Sudan and South Sudan backwards and undermine the development and peace that the people so desperately need and want.”

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](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Brundtland](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) (Chair).

[Nelson Mandela](#) is an honorary Elder.

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

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