

The Elders call for decisive action to end sectarian violence in Sri Lanka

LONDON, 16 March 2018

The Elders today called on the Government of Sri Lanka to act with greater urgency and thoroughness to end sectarian violence targeting Muslim communities on the island.

They noted that the Government has taken some measures to counter the criminal violence, but also warned that since unrest erupted on 5 March, police and civil authorities have failed to make sufficient arrests or counter the inflammatory messaging on social media against Muslims being propagated by extremist Buddhist monks.

To avoid further deterioration of the security environment and loss of life, The Elders urged decisive action from the Government to end impunity for those committing and inciting violence, defend human rights and promote inter-communal reconciliation.

[Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), Deputy Chair of The Elders and former Prime Minister of Norway, said:

“I am deeply alarmed by the recent upsurge in sectarian violence in Sri Lanka. Anti-Muslim attacks are an increasing threat to peace and security across South and South-East Asia, and the authorities in Colombo need to act urgently to restore peace and order before communal relations deteriorate further.”

[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), Elder and former UN diplomat, added:

“Sri Lanka has had more than its fair share of strife, violence and gross human rights abuses in recent years. The people of Sri Lanka deserve peace, and their Government fully understands and accepts that it has a responsibility to protect the rights of all its people. All political and civil society leaders must reject the toxic rhetoric of Islamophobia from extremist Buddhist monks, the consequences of which can be seen across the region. All should do more to promote tolerance and reconciliation.”

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](#) (Chair), [Ban Ki-moon](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) (Deputy 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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