

Decisive action from Russia, Iran and Turkey required to avoid needless deaths in Idlib siege, Elders warn

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The Elders strongly urge the three guarantors of the “Astana Process” – Iran, Russia and Turkey – to overcome their recent differences and work hand-in-hand to prevent heavy civilian casualties in Syria’s Idlib region. A large-scale offensive there appears imminent.

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

“Russia, Iran and Turkey have taken it upon themselves to work together to restore peace and security to Syria. As a result, they have a heavy responsibility to act decisively at this time to prevent further deaths and injuries to civilians in Idlib. The situation could not be more urgent.”

Almost half Idlib’s estimated population of 2.9 million are people who have been displaced from other parts of the country. Among them, about a million children are most at risk. Indiscriminate aerial bombardments over the past days are already reported to have caused many casualties.

[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), Elder and the former UN and Arab League Special Envoy for Syria, added:

“The people of Syria have suffered too much and for far too long. The Syrian Government and its supporters, Turkey and the armed groups can and must do all that is necessary to ensure that the vast civilian population in Idlib province receives the effective protection which international humanitarian law gives them.”

The Elders have long urged the US and Russian Governments to work together, patiently and persistently, first to end the fighting and then to focus on a meaningful political process.

The UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura has called for a Syrian constitutional committee to meet in Geneva in the coming days.

[Martti Ahtisaari](#), Elder, Nobel Laureate and former President of Finland who has helped end several intractable conflicts, commented:

“Any lasting solution to this war must of course be fully Syrian-owned. But, to get to that point, the external actors first need to work together. The reference point must remain UN Security

Council Resolution 2254 of December 2015. It was approved unanimously and remains the agreed political route for Syria.”

ENDS

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