

The Elders call for urgent review of foreign military assistance to Israel over Gaza atrocities

4 December 2023

Statement: The Elders today call for governments providing military assistance to Israel to review their approach, and set conditions for any future provision. They warn that Israel's renewed military campaign in Gaza risks fuelling an escalating cycle of mass atrocities.

Israel's disproportionate response to the horrendous terror attacks by Hamas on 7 October - which the Elders unequivocally [condemned](#) - has reached a level of inhumanity towards Palestinians in Gaza that is intolerable.

The war between Hamas and Israel has caused collective trauma on both sides. Palestinians and Israelis continue to fear for their lives, and feel a sense of existential threat. More killing is not the answer.

Negotiation is the way to end this conflict. The Elders commend the diplomatic leadership of Qatar, Egypt and the USA. During seven days without fighting, negotiations secured the release of some Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and more humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

But Palestinian civilians in Gaza are now facing even worse horrors. Civilian deaths caused by Israeli forces since 7 October have been unprecedented, but described by Prime Minister Netanyahu as "collateral damage". Many Gazans are living in inhumane conditions with no basic human dignity, and increasing risks of deadly disease and starvation.

If the world can watch this scale of brutality and suffering and not prevent it, we have lost our common humanity.

US Secretary of State Blinken's [statement](#) that it is "imperative that Israel act in accordance with international humanitarian law and the laws of war" must be backed by action to ensure proportionality and protect civilians. Words are not enough.

States have a legal obligation to take steps to prevent atrocity crimes. The de-humanising rhetoric that has accompanied large-scale violence in this war is a warning sign that cannot be

ignored. Governments which provide military assistance in the knowledge that atrocities are being committed, or may be imminent, risk being complicit.

The Elders urge leaders with influence on Israel and Hamas, particularly in the USA, Europe and the region, to push for a permanent ceasefire, and full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2712 (passed on 15 November). This includes all parties complying with international humanitarian law, the restoration of basic services and humanitarian assistance indispensable to survival, protection of all medical and humanitarian staff, including UN facilities, and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups.

Leaders must act now to deter atrocities and end impunity, including by:

- Urgently reviewing military assistance to Israel, and putting in place conditions for any future provision.
- Using targeted measures and smart sanctions on extremist settlers committing violence against civilians in the West Bank (such as the visa bans planned by the USA), and on those in the Israeli government who are pursuing ethnic cleansing and annexation of Palestinian land.
- Enabling the International Criminal Court to accelerate its investigation into atrocity crimes by all parties, given its role in deterrence and the importance of moral and legal consistency.
- Conveying clearly to Hamas that deliberately killing and capturing civilians are war crimes that undermine the legitimate aims of the Palestinian national movement.

Only a political solution can guarantee security and equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians. The Elders reiterate their [call on President Biden](#) to set out a serious peace plan and help build a new coalition for peace to deliver it. This would restore hope to those on both sides who believe in the UN Security Council's vision of "a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders", and help save Palestinian and Israeli lives now.

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Media enquiries

William French, Head of Communications

T: +44 7795 693903

media@theElders.org

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