

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak  
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
No 10 Downing Street,  
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November 29, 2023

“My eyes fail from weeping,  
I am in torment within;  
my heart is poured out on the ground  
because my people are destroyed,  
because children and infants faint  
in the streets of the city.” Lamentations 2:11

Dear Prime Minister,

We have watched in horror and sadness at the devastation unfolding in Palestine and Israel since October 7th. As leaders of Christian communities throughout the world, we join in grief for the Israelis and Palestinians who are mourning loved ones who have died. Our faith compels us to speak out. To make clear that we oppose violence, whether directed toward Israelis or Palestinians. Even the loss of one more life is one too many. International humanitarian law must be respected and adhered to by all sides.

We welcome the recent announcement about the release of dozens of hostages and a parallel prisoner exchange, in addition to the desperately needed few days of a cessation of violence. Now is the time to redouble our efforts to insist that a long-standing bilateral ceasefire comes to fruition.

We acknowledge the profound and existential grief experienced as a result of the actions of Hamas on October 7 as a tragedy for Jewish people in Israel and around the world. We weep with those who have loved ones held hostage, and we pray for their immediate release.

Like the author of Lamentations, our broken hearts weep as we hear of Palestinian babies in Gaza dying and of the thousands of children who have lost their lives. More than eleven thousand Palestinians have been killed, tens of thousands have been wounded, and 1.6 million have been

displaced from their homes and communities. It is unacceptable that millions of people are in desperate need of clean water, adequate food, fuel for electricity, and urgently needed medical supplies. Without safe drinking water and proper medical supplies, poor hygiene conditions have already led to more preventable deaths, especially among children. We weep with broken hearts as we hear of hospitals, mosques, churches, and schools damaged and destroyed by this war. In Gaza, there is no safe place. There is no refuge. There is no escape.

The escalation of war cannot be adequately understood without acknowledging the conflict's broader backdrop - ongoing Israeli occupation and the disenfranchisement of Palestinians for more than 70 years. Three-quarters of Palestinian residents of Gaza are refugees dating back to 1948. Before 7 October 2023 had already been on track to be the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the Second Intifada in 2000. Under the current Israeli government, there has been a significant expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, emboldening Israeli settlers to act with impunity as they attack Palestinians and force them from their homes. Settler violence has brutally intensified since 7th October, while there has been an increase in abuse, harassment, and discrimination of Palestinian Israeli citizens in Israel. A future where all human dignity in the region is respected looks distant if these realities are not acknowledged.

We stand up ardently against the vitriolic hatred that is being expressed around the world toward Jews, Muslims, and others because of firmly held convictions about the war. We condemn crimes of hate and uphold that all people should be able to live without fear, with security, and with equally protected human rights. We lament how this conflict is straining community cohesion and interreligious efforts.

We write as religious leaders to say enough is enough. We cannot remain silent as generations of families in Gaza are wiped out in an instant. World leaders cannot sit by while Palestinian civilians in Gaza experience such catastrophic destruction and trauma. The relentless and unrestrained bombing campaign with horrific indiscriminate effects and the ground invasion by Israel must end.

We are deeply grieved by the complicity of the United States and several other Western countries in the continued violence through efforts to actively oppose a ceasefire, including by vetoing multiple United Nations Resolutions. Instead, we call on governments worldwide to do everything possible to secure a bilateral ceasefire, one that will stop all violence from Hamas and Israel, allow for the safe release of civilian hostages held in Gaza, and give immediate and adequate access to desperately needed humanitarian aid to be delivered, including through crossings to Israel.

Without an agreed upon end to violence from all parties – there is no path forward. We call on all governments to show support for the protection of all human life, advocating for a just and durable resolution to this crisis in which all Israelis and Palestinians might realize a vision of a just peace, illuminating human dignity, advancing security and self-determination for all.

Yours sincerely,

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