

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
No 10 Downing Street,
London, SW1P 2AB

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,

Christine Allen

Director, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development

Dr. Nicola Brady

General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

The Rt. Rev. Christopher Chessun

The Lord Bishop of Southwark, Church of England

Rt. Rev. Michael Doe

Assistant Bishop and Preacher to Gray's Inn (London)

Anglican Diocese of Southwark Trustee

The Balfour Project

Rt. Rev. Sally Foster-Fulton

Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland

Rev. Dr. Tessa Henry-Robinson

Moderator of the General Assembly, United Reformed Church

John Hill

Interim General Secretary, The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

The Most Rev. Dr. Michael Jackson

Archbishop of Dublin, Church of Ireland

Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Langrish

Former Bishop of Exeter

Tim Livesey

Chief Executive, Embrace the Middle East

Very Rev. Andrew R.C. McLellan, C.B.E.

Former Moderator, General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Rev. Gill Newton

President, Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain

Paul Parker

Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain

Father Timothy Radcliffe, OP

Former Master of the Order of Preachers

Rev. Chris Rose

Director, Amos Trust

Patrick Watts

Director, Christian Aid

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Jo Bailey Wells

Deputy Secretary General, Anglican Communion, London

Joyce Ajlouny

General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian

Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate Diocese, Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

Rev. David E. Bennett

President, Moravian Church Provincial Elders' Conference

Rev. Bronwen Boswell

Acting Stated Clerk, General Assembly Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Bishop Susan J. Briner

Southwestern Texas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. LaMarco Antonio Cable

Co-Executive, Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ (UCC)

Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar

Oregon Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon

Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

The Rt. Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler

Episcopal Bishop of Wyoming, Founding President of CARAVAN

Stassi Cramm

President, Community of Christ

Rev. Dr. Rob Dalrymple

Leadership Board, Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME)

Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe

Diocese of Central New York, The Episcopal Church

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Pastor Ps L. Elliott

General Secretary, Rhema Family Churches

Bishop Paul D. Erickson

Greater Milwaukee Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America (RCA)

Susan Gunn

Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Andrew S. Hamilton

District Executive, Southeastern District Church of the Brethren

Lisa Sharon Harper

President and Founder, Freedom Road

The Rev. Deborah Hutterer

Bishop of the Grand Canyon Synod, Evangelical Church in America (ELCA)

Bishop Richard Jaech

Southwestern Washington Synod, Evangelical Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Kevin T Jones

Bishop of Northeastern Iowa Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Nicolas Kazarian

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Dr. Peter Makari

Co-Executive, Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ (UCC)

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Rev. Felix Malpica

Bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

The Rev. Lee M. Miller II

Bishop of the Upstate NY Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Professor Leepo Modise

University of South Africa

Bridget Moix

General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Dr. Lungile Mpetsheni

General Secretary, The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana

General Secretary, South African Council of Churches

Scott Murphy

President, Community of Christ

Rev. Sipiwe Ndebele

Evangelical Alliance of South Africa

Rev. David M. Neuhaus, SJ
Superior of Holy Land Jesuits

Rev. Amy J. Odgren
Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens
General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada

Rev. Dr. Tyrone S. Pitts
General Secretary Emeritus/Ecumenical Officer , Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.

The Rt. Rev. Bavi Rivera
Bishop of Eastern Oregon, The Episcopal Church

Richard L. Santos
President and CEO, Church World Service (CWS)

Bishop G.S. Seane
Central Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa (ELCSA)

Bishop Sithembele Sipuka
Catholic Bishop of Umtata, South Africa

Andrea Smith
Founding Board Member, Evangelicals4Justice

Rev. Jason Smith
Executive Director, BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz

Bishop Kevin L. Strickland
Southwestern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Bishop Pedro M. Suarez
Florida-Bahamas Synod. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Adam Taylor
President, Sojourners

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson
General Minister and President. United Church of Christ (UCC)

Rev. N. Tyokolwana

Moravian Church, South Africa

Nikki Toyama-Szeto

Executive Director, Christians for Social Action (CSA)

Rev. Sandra María Van Opstal

Founder, Chasing Justice

Father Thomas Zain

Vicar General, Antiochian Orthodox Church