

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, The Prime Minister, and
The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP, Leader of the Opposition

23 November 2023

Dear Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition,

An Open Letter on the Situation in Gaza

We welcome news of a 4-day pause in fighting in Gaza. However, we urge you to renew your commitment to justice and the upholding of international law, and make this pause permanent.

Since October 7th, women and children, the elderly, and the already weak have borne the brunt of this crisis. The world has witnessed the collapse of emergency medical services, aid services, sanitary services, and telecommunications. The toll on innocent lives has been unconscionable, and we believe the UK government's response thus far has fallen short of our shared democratic principles and universal human rights values.

According to the UN chief, 'the world is witnessing an unparalleled and unprecedented' civilian death toll. As of Monday 20th November 2023:

- Over 13,000 civilians have been killed, of which more than 5 350 were children
- It is said 2 mothers have been killed every hour
- There are 2000 new widows, without adequate food, housing, and sanitation services
- 1.7 million people are displaced across the Gaza strip
- 1500 children remain missing
- Al-Shifa hospital, the Indonesian Hospital and Al Fakhouri school have been attacked
- 24 people were killed in the attack that directly hit Al Fakhouri school in Jabalia - at the time of the incident the facility was sheltering around 7000 internally displaced.
- Over 50 journalists have been killed
- 83 mosques have been destroyed and another 170 damaged
- 67 UNWRA installations have been damaged
- 104 UNWRA staff killed
- 884k people are currently sheltering in 154 UNWRA installations
- Access to food, electricity, water and fuel was cut off, increasing the scale of devastation and decreasing the impact of capability of humanitarian efforts

The UN Development Programme and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has warned that up to 16 years of human development could be wiped out. According to their projections following assessment, “a third month of war would see poverty increase by almost 45 percent, raising the number of additional people pushed into poverty to more than 660,000, while the decrease of GDP will reach 12.2 percent with total losses of US\$2.5 billion.”

The gravity of the situation cannot be overstated, and it is imperative that we collectively respond to the many contraventions of international law we are witnessing. We urgently implore you to take the following actions:

- **Make the Pause Permanent:** Demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire from all parties involved in the conflict, including release of all hostages and prisoners.
- **Immediate Water, Food and Fuel:** Deliver and permit others to provide immediate access to water, food and fuel at the scale required.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** Deliver and permit others to provide immediate humanitarian aid at the scale required, ensuring that essential supplies, medical assistance, psychological support, safe housing and other support needed reach all those in need
- **UNRWA Support:** Strengthen support for UNRWA to address the immediate needs of those affected by the conflict. Everything destroyed must be rebuilt, and additional resources provided to ensure the return and well-being of displaced populations.
- **Accountability for International Law Violations:** Support efforts to hold accountable those responsible for violations of international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. A commitment to justice is fundamental for long-term stability and reconciliation.
- **Long-term Solutions:** Actively engage in collaborative efforts that focus on fostering harmony, safety, and a sustainable economy for the residents of Palestine, and ensure that the voices of women are heard.

The world is watching, and your actions will shape the course of history. As UK citizens, our collective adherence to international law and commitment to justice is pivotal in addressing the challenges we face.

Let us stand together for peace, justice, and the universal values enshrined in international law and make the pause permanent.

Sincerely,

Baroness Shaista Gohir OBE (CEO)

Dr. Iram Sattar MBE (Co-Chair)

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