

From the Public Square Group

In Association with Modern Church



London, 27th July 2025

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer, KC
The Prime Minister
10, Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

Palestine: Inaction against Genocide and War Crimes

We write to you as a group associated with Modern Church, founded in 1898 as an Anglican society promoting liberal Christian theology.

Four of the Lords Spiritual wrote to 'The Guardian' recently about the dire situation on the West Bank. Now is the time for your Government to lend support to them, doing everything necessary to relieve starvation and do everything necessary for peace, humanity, and justice in Gaza and the West Bank.

We are appalled by the atrocities being committed by Israel in Palestine, which amount to war crimes or genocide, or both. The declared policy of the State of Israel includes

- attacking innocent civilians, predominantly including women and children;
- using starvation as a means of war, and that
- an entire population is being driven out of their homes.

We note that already on 24th May last year, the International Court of Justice reaffirmed its provisional orders of 26th January and 28th March, which provided as follows.

'The State of Israel shall, in conformity with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and in view of the worsening conditions of life faced by civilians in the Rafah Governorate:

.....

Immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

.....

Maintain open the Rafah crossing for unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance;

.....

Take effective measures to ensure the unimpeded access to the Gaza Strip of any commission of inquiry, fact-finding mission or other investigative body mandated by competent organs of the United Nations to investigate allegations of genocide;

.....’

We call on you to assist in enforcing this Order of the ICJ, and to call on our country's allies to take all means available to enforce compliance against the State of Israel. We believe that countries which fail to assist the enforcement of the ICJ's Order, including the Government of the United Kingdom, run a discernible risk of being found to have been complicit in genocide.

What is happening is beyond words of horror at the suffering. We stand helpless in the face of the maiming and killing, particularly of children, their mothers and fathers trying to get food for their families, who are being driven from their homes, lands and especially their olive trees, which are planted for the livelihood of future generations. Only strong and decisive government action has any chance of stopping this abomination. We call on you to lead such practical action which you have promised but not enacted.

We call on you also to lead and support a stronger public witness against Israel's genocidal actions from our nation. In the churches from which our members come, we will support you, if you come out clearly against these continued atrocities. Silence is not an option.

We are dismayed at the decision of your Government to designate Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation, and would ask that this be urgently reconsidered. There is already perfectly adequate legal protection against vandalism, which should always be distinguished from terrorism. The right of freedom to protest must again be unfettered in this country.

There is a religious dimension to this conflict, which involves Jews, Muslims and Christians; leaders in all three faiths stand ready to assist in taking all steps necessary to bring about peace and justice in the region. Our fellow Christians in Palestine and Israel need your

support. We would particularly draw your attention to the work of the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem, in solidarity with whom we write this letter.

Governments, including our own, need to take action to secure a lasting two-state settlement which is fast fading as a viable option. For this to be possible,

Palestine must be recognised as a sovereign state,
the rights of all to live in freedom and safety must be recognised, and
illegal Israeli settlements and land appropriation in the West Bank must be reversed and prohibited.

We call for an embargo on the supply of all arms for Israel, including parts for F35 aircraft, by our government. The exception allowed by the High Court in relation to F35 parts should not be used. Any commercial harm resulting from the application of sanctions is nugatory by comparison with the death and destruction to innocent civilians caused by the use of these aircraft by the State of Israel.

Aid agencies and medical charities must be allowed to carry out their work freely, safely and unhindered. In particular, UNWRA must be allowed to resume distribution of food and other aid, and the so-called 'Gaza Humanitarian Foundation' dismantled forthwith. The dropping of food and other aid from the air is dangerous, ineffective and should cease. In any event the RAF should not participate in or facilitate this activity.

The Israeli embargo on news reporting from Gaza by the BBC and other reputable news agencies should be challenged.

The situation in the Middle East is too often seen as intractable; but with good intentions, skilled diplomacy and the will to engage in these, it is not. The time is now and further delay is deeply damaging.

Yours faithfully

Canon Dr. Richard Truss, Canon David Driscoll, Revd Dr. Carole Bourne, Dr Joseph Forde, Mrs Sally Barnes, Mr Terry Drummond, Mr Hugh D. Bryant

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