

The Prime Minister, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Rt Hon James
Cleverly MP,
The Attorney General, Attorney General Victoria Prentis KC

Sent by email to:

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8 November 2023

Dear Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, and Attorney General

It has been nearly four weeks since we first wrote urging you to prioritize civilian protection above all other considerations. We recognise that you have made some moves in this direction.

Since then the facts on the ground have altered considerably.

The number of civilian casualties has escalated beyond all proportion.

Over 10,000 people have died, at least 4,000 of whom are children and 3,000 women. Children represent a disproportionate number of the 25,000 people wounded, many with life-changing injuries. Two million people are traumatised. 88 UNRWA staff have been killed (the highest number of UN fatalities ever recorded in a single conflict); journalists and medics have been killed in disproportionate numbers.

There is inadequate food; the water being consumed is contaminated causing sickness; there is no sanitation; and the severe lack of medical provisions means that major surgery and amputations are being performed with no anaesthesia.

Over half of Gaza's 35 hospitals are no longer open and the vast majority of health clinics have closed; 164 education facilities have been destroyed or damaged including 20 UNRWA schools; over 40% of residential housing units have been destroyed or damaged; Gaza's infrastructure has all but been destroyed.

And the bombings and attacks continue unabated.

As you are fully aware, the UK is the penholder on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in the Security Council. Accordingly, we have a special responsibility, above and beyond being a permanent Member, to take a lead in championing civilian protection. We urge you to do so.

The UK has made it repeatedly clear that the right of a state to resort to force in self-defence (under the UN Charter and customary international law) is subject to necessity and proportionality. In this context, proportionality applies to the military campaign *as a whole* and is a separate obligation from proportionality in international humanitarian law.

The level of human suffering being inflicted on the Palestinian civilian population is, on any measure, wholly disproportionate to Israel's right to self-defence. For that reason we urge you to take a lead within the Security Council, use your position as penholder, and call on *all* parties to this conflict to commit to an immediate ceasefire.

Yours sincerely

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