



Sir Keir Starmer
Leader of the Opposition
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

16 November 2023

Dear Keir Starmer,

We are writing to urge you to immediately support a ceasefire in Gaza.

Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) is part of Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest network of grassroots environmental organisations. We oppose all acts of violence. We condemn the killings by Hamas of at least 900 civilians, primarily Israeli, on 7 October, the taking of civilian hostages and indiscriminate rocket attacks into Israel. However, these violations of international law and war crimes do not, and must not be used to, justify collective punishment – in this case, the collective punishment of the civilian population of Gaza and other serious breaches of international law being committed by Israel. Please see our [additional reflections](#) on the current situation.

As we are all aware, the current situation for civilians in Gaza is truly horrific; '[carnage](#)' in the words yesterday of the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. An already catastrophic situation can only get worse without a ceasefire. Humanitarian pauses will not be enough to prevent further mass destruction and loss of life.

Our sister group in Palestine is PENGON (Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network)/Friends of the Earth Palestine). They are a network of well-respected grassroots environmental organisations active in both Gaza and the West Bank, many of which work on water and sanitation issues at the community level. Since the start of the Israeli assault on Gaza we know of at least one member of PENGON's network, Islam Ali, that has been killed by an Israeli airstrike, many others have lost their homes, are displaced, and the office of one member group has been damaged in Gaza.

We are writing today to call on you in your capacity as leader of the Opposition to urgently support calls for a ceasefire in Gaza and to strengthen calls to all parties to respect international law by condemning violations of international law, whoever the perpetrator.

We are also deeply concerned by ongoing violence in the West Bank, where the UN estimates over 190 Palestinians have been killed, either by members of the Israeli armed forces or settlers, over 1,000 have been displaced, and 3,000 arrested since 7 October. Members of our network in the West Bank are currently frequently unable to

travel to their offices because of the violence, and settler violence is preventing or impeding access to the communities with whom they work.

By failing to condemn violations of international law by all parties, the Labour Party is not using its voice and influence to prevent further civilian death and mass destruction in Gaza by Israeli forces or other human rights abuses in Palestine.

An immediate ceasefire is the most effective way to protect civilians.

An immediate ceasefire is vital to enable aid agencies to get sufficient relief into the Gaza Strip and to distribute it safely.

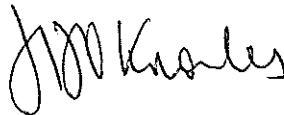
A ceasefire would enable organisations such as PENGON to carry out urgent work including the distribution of water without risk to their lives.

A ceasefire could also enable independent and impartial investigations into human rights violations and war crimes by all parties to be carried out, including by the International Criminal Court and the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

A ceasefire could also help secure the release of hostages.

We call on you to call urgently for a ceasefire and to additionally support UN Security Council resolutions to this effect.

Yours sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MT'.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Hugh Knowles'.

Miriam Turner and Hugh Knowles
Co-Executive Directors
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland