Dear <Bishop’s name>

I am writing to you as my bishop about the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. I am asking you to urgently call on the UK Government to respond to the demand, including from the churches, for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, in order to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe and loss of innocent lives.

I am deeply concerned about the positions taken by the UK Government and the Opposition in response to these events. Specifically, their repeated failures to call for an immediate ceasefire or, in any meaningful way, require Israel to uphold international law, and together with Egypt, facilitate immediate and appropriate levels of humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

The murders, attacks and hostage-taking by Hamas on 7 October were heinous crimes, and those responsible must be held to account. Securing the hostages’ safe release is of paramount importance. My thoughts and prayers are with the Jewish community here in the UK; antisemitism is abhorrent, and I am deeply troubled by the rise in hate attacks in recent weeks.

The Israeli military response in Gaza has added enormously to the toll of civilian suffering. Innocent Palestinians are living through an increasingly grave humanitarian crisis, now including the possibility of famine, particularly in the north. This is a result of the Israeli government’s strategies of relentless bombardment, the apparently indiscriminate killing of civilians, and of complete siege, which effectively strangles life and has left no place safe for civilians to flee. We now know that the death toll in Gaza is over 30,000. With no end to the war or the siege in sight and increasing levels of disease and hunger, that horrendous death toll is set to rise dramatically.

All human lives are equally precious. Nothing can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians – whether the killings and hostage-taking by Hamas or the relentless aerial bombardment, sniper shootings and illegal cutting off of food, electricity, medicines and water supplies by the Israeli military.

The work of a number of Christian organisations in Gaza continues, despite the immensely challenging circumstances. No doubt you are aware of the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, run by the Diocese of Jerusalem, that has been struck by two missiles. It also had its front wall flattened when the Israeli forces raided the hospital, detaining most of the medical staff and leaving hundreds of patients in a dire situation. The hospital is currently the only hospital in the north with a functioning operating theatre, but with no fuel left, no food available to purchase and the solar panels working at 30% capacity due to damage, there is only so long they can continue to provide services.

Around 400 Christian families remain in the two churches close to Al Ahli hospital but they are also running out of food and with no ability to purchase more, the presence of the Christian community is now under immediate threat.

I would urge you to put into action the Micah imperative to “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God”. Justice, mercy and humility seem to be in short supply among our political leaders, and I am deeply concerned about their response to the events in Israel and Gaza.

Specifically, I ask you to work with other Bishops, Lords Spiritual, and church leaders to put pressure on Britain’s political leaders to:

* Demand an immediate ceasefire without conditions
* Demand the unconditional and immediate release of all hostages
* Call for unfettered and immediate humanitarian access, as urged by the UN, including immediate reconnection to water and electricity
* Acknowledge the failure of the international community to engage in any meaningful peace process in the Middle East, and to commit to addressing the root causes of the violence, which must include an end to the Israeli occupation and an end to the 16-year blockade of Gaza.

I hope you will take swift action to address the issues I have raised. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

<Your name and address>