



29 December 2025

OPEN LETTER

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PREVENT THE DEATHS OF THE PALESTINIAN ACTION HUNGER STRIKERS: HOLD THE UK GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT

Global South Against Xenophobia (GSAX) and its allies call on the South African government to urgently engage the United Kingdom (UK) Embassy and the British Council to help save the lives of six Palestinian Action (PA) hunger strikers in the UK. These political prisoners are protesting their unjust remand in prison for defending the rights of the Palestinian people, who are facing genocide, ethnic cleansing, and elimination by Israel. Their lives and their cause must be supported.

The PA hunger strikers, Qesser Zuhrah, Amu Gib, Heba Muraisi, Teuta Hoxha (also known as T. Hoxha), Kamran Ahmed, and Lewie Chiaramello, are being detained in the UK under highly questionable processes. They are now at a critical stage in their hunger strike, with their bodies nearing irreversible collapse. Media reports indicate that they have been transferred to a hospital; simply put, they are dying. Without urgent and responsible intervention to end their hunger strike, these young people are at risk of death in the coming days.

The activists are being held on remand on charges related to alleged actions in solidarity with Palestine, primarily at an Elbit Systems factory in Filton and at RAF Brize Norton. Protests against these entities are connected to Britain's supply of weapons to Israel for its genocide against Palestinians. The six are awaiting trial, and have not been convicted of any crime.

Their five primary demands are:

1. End all censorship related to public support for Palestinian rights, including citizens' right to protest against the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.
2. Grant the hunger strikers immediate bail.
3. Guarantee their right to a fair trial.
4. Deproscribe Palestine Action in the UK, affirming the sovereign right of all British citizens the right to support the movement.
5. Shut down all Elbit Systems sites, in compliance with the July 2024 recommendation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that states refrain from supplying weapons and dual-use items to Israel, which the ICJ has found to be plausibly perpetrating genocide in Gaza.

South Africans enjoy the right to protest against human atrocities, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, the “crime of crimes.” These rights were hard-earned through our anti-apartheid struggle. Under apartheid, some detained unjustly by the regime used hunger strikes as the only form of resistance available to them, calling for justice for themselves and for all who were oppressed. As a nation, we must therefore stand in solidarity with these six young people, support their reasonable demands, and urge the British government to end its injustices against them, actions that could ultimately cost them their lives.

South Africa’s genocide case against Israel at the ICJ offers an additional and compelling basis for intervention. Both the hunger strikers and our ICJ case are principled efforts to pursue justice. People across the world, those who believe in justice for Palestinians and in holding Israel and its allies to account must stand together. For example, Sinn Féin has called on British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to act responsibly, drawing on Ireland’s own history of hunger strikes in the struggle for independence: <https://www.centrafifetimes.com/news/national/25710128.sinn-fein-urges-starmer-intervene-case-pro-palestine-hunger-strikers/>

To uphold ethical solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine, who are being subjected to genocide by Israel, we call on the President to immediately halt all coal exports to Israel. This will address a key cause of the ongoing genocide, that is, Israel’s access to energy to continue with impunity, as our coal contributes to fueling the genocide. A coal embargo will increase pressure on Israel to end its unlawful, inhumane, and criminal actions against the Palestinian people and to pursue a genuine ceasefire and meaningful dialogue, neither of which is evident in US President Trump’s so-called 20-Point Peace Plan.

South Africa must correct its current stance and avoid the risk of ridicule at the ICJ in January 2026 for failing to implement the Court’s recommendations that all states hold Israel to account. We must stop supplying Israel with the means to continue its “plausible genocide,” which numerous expert bodies and individuals now confidently identify as genocide. If we fail to act, Israel could accuse South Africa of aiding its actions in Gaza, of disregarding the ICJ’s July 2024 recommendation to cease trade in war-related goods with Israel, and of failing to guide Israel away from its genocidal mandate against the Palestinians. This untenable scenario must be avoided by ending all coal trade with Israel.

Our own history, together with global experience, our shared future, and basic humanitarian principles, demand that our government use its influence to rally the British government to stop this tragedy and prevent further injustice. South Africa must, in this regard, mobilise the SADC, the AU, the UN, other states, and relevant international bodies to jointly urge Prime Minister Starmer to intervene in this humanitarian crisis. To demonstrate its unwavering commitment to opposing genocide and upholding international law, our government must immediately announce a coal embargo on Israel.

We call on all people in the Republic to lobby our government, the British Embassy, and the British Council to act urgently to prevent this atrocity. We urge swift, ethical action to save the lives of the six prisoners of conscience, who are guilty of no crime but are advocating for the just cause of having their rights respected and of ending the genocide of the Palestinian people by Israel and its allies.

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This letter is also endorsed by the following organisations and individuals in their personal capacity:

1. Network for Immigrant Rights & Responsibilities in South Africa (NIRRSA)
2. SWANSA Palestine Support Group
3. National Association of Democratic Lawyers (Durban)
4. Kuyasa Mthi Street Community Members (Western Cape)
5. TamKirst NPO 318-170
6. Distinguished Prof. Patrick Bond (University of Johannesburg)
7. Pregs Govender (Former MP and SA Human Rights Commissioner)
8. Canon Revd. Michael Weeder
9. Dr. Aslam Dasoo (National Convenor, Progressive Health Forum)
10. Lancelot Thomas (Centre for Faith and Community)
11. Edward Muchatuta (National Coordinator, ZEP Coordinating Committee)
12. Roshila Nair
13. Hassen Lorgat
14. Ann October (Eastridge, Mitchellsplain)
15. Princess Majola
16. Ruwayda Akbar
17. Divine Witbooi
18. Tito Haguma Theogene
19. Lumumba Chia
20. Melanie Alperstein
21. Dr. Quraysha Ismail Sooliman
22. Muhammad Masoom Bagdadi
23. Riyaaz Ismail
24. Marguerite Holtzhause
25. Rev. Annie Kirke
26. Mooketsi Diba
27. Lorna Houston
28. Sikhander Coopoo (East London, Eastern Cape)
29. Ngozo Crispin Kassarombo
30. Khokhoma Motsi
31. Prof. Kelly Gillespie
32. Imraahn Mukkadam
33. Farida Myburgh (East London, Eastern Cape)
34. Rev. Laurie Guam (Cape Town, Western Cape)
35. Sibonelo Ncanana Trower (Johannesburg, Gauteng)
36. Tyrone Parks (Cape Town, Western Cape)
37. Mustapha Hassan Khan
38. Goolam Hanware
39. Fuzile Jwara (Gauteng)
40. Dr. Rubina Setlhare
41. Zohra Essack (KwaZulu Natal)
42. Khululekile Banzi
43. Dr. Albert Mpazayabo
44. Xana McCauley
45. Bunana Gaby Bikombo
46. Lucky Thwala (President, Sisonke Revolutionary Movement, Gauteng)
47. Suzanne Hotz
48. Nazli Rahim
49. Anita Shaw

50. Mariam Edwards
51. Faiza Leith
52. Naima Omar
53. Ayesha Bagus
54. Fatiema Haron-Masoet
55. Waseela Everson
56. Marion Stevens
57. Heather van Niekerk
58. Gertrude Fester-Wicomb
59. Sarah Oosthuizen
60. Masoodah Chikte
61. Sumayyah Khan
62. Irene Knight
63. Nazreena Hassim
64. Karen Daniels
65. Fiona Brittion
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69. Jean Pierre Botha
70. Yusef Bosman
71. Sibongakonke Ndlovu (Newcastle, KwaZulu Natal)
72. Norma Mbele (Orange Farm, Gauteng)
73. Dr. Lesley-Ann Foster (East London, Eastern Cape)
74. Britt Baatjes
75. Zureena Smith (Gqeberha, Eastern Cape)
76. Shaine Griqua (Northern Cape)
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80. Sarah Mia
81. Dr. Fatima Khan (Cape Town, Western Cape)
82. Vanessa Japtha (Cape Town, Western Cape)
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84. Bonita Bennett (Researcher: Heritage, Memory, Displacement. Cape Town, SA)
85. Michael Abrams, (Popular Educator. Cape Town, SA)
86. Nicole Collier-Naidoo
87. Julekha Van Dorsen
88. Wendy Lewin (South African Christians for a Free Palestine. Cape Town)
89. Roberto De Paoli (Cape Town, Western Cape)
90. Dr Vanessa Farr (Mycelium Media Colab. Cape Town, Western Cape)
91. Heather Tuffin
92. Earl Mentor (Cape Town, Western Cape)
93. Brendyn Alloys (Cape Town, Western Cape)
94. Jacqui Benson-Mabombo
95. Dr. Shuaib Manjra (Cape Town, Western Cape)
96. Dela Gwala (Cape Town, Western Cape)
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105. Anele Mafoco
106. Melanie Berrington (Gqeberha, Eastern Cape)
107. Prof. Heidi Grunebaum
108. Christine Marie
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122. Dr. Willson Tarusarira (University of Free State-Disability Rights Unit)
123. Merran Roy (Director, Intlantsi Creative Development Project)
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