Church Leaders' statement on Gaza, and on the recognition of the State of Palestine by the United Kingdom Government:

We unite to ask for the immediate cessation of violence and the relief of the suffering of the people in Gaza, and echo the words of Pope Leo in calling for "a ceasefire, for the release of the hostages, for a negotiated diplomatic solution, and for full respect for international humanitarian law." In reaffirming the "inviolable dignity" of each person made in the image of God, he reaffirms that understanding which we hold in common and speaks of a dignity that deserves to be "respected and protected". We are deeply conscious of the extent to which that human dignity has been violated and that both young and old, strong and vulnerable, are all alike exposed to the threat of death and destruction.

In the light of this, we call for the release of the hostages taken on 7 October 2023 and an immediate ceasefire for the sake of all.
Further, we call for all parties to unite in the provision of humanitarian aid and, while recognising the extreme difficulties faced by all agencies in this regard, we ask that, as a matter of urgency, an accord be reached which would enable such provision to be made.

We are especially conscious of the perilous situation faced by the Christian church in Gaza, and we pray for those who in their suffering continue to bear witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We urge the United Kingdom Government to recognise the State of Palestine and call upon the Government to now fulfil its stated intention to do so, and thereafter to join the international community in seeking to establish a viable State within Gaza and the West Bank. We recall that the Vatican recognised the State of Palestine in May 2015 and we join with all those who affirm the right of self-determination by the Palestinian people.

Signatories:

Bishop John Keenan,
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland

Rt Rev Rosie Frew,
Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland