



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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United Nations
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Dear Foreign Secretary

Labour government has betrayed its manifesto commitment on aid budget

The Labour government made a manifesto commitment in 2024 to restore the aid budget to 0.7% GDP. But instead, by slashing the budget further to 0.3%, it has betrayed its promises and is causing irreparable harm to Global South communities.

We are the UK Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF UK). WILPF's mission is to build a global peace by addressing the root causes of violence, conflict and inequality. We are writing to add our voice to the many who are concerned about the impact of these aid cuts on some of the world's poorest countries which aid agencies have described as leaving "the UK's reputation in tatters, and a poorer, more unequal and unstable world for us all."¹

All over the UK, people are suffering from austerity policies that have taken them into poverty, homelessness and falling standards in a health service and education system that cannot meet their needs, while an idea about being 'war ready' is presented as the reason why we are repeatedly told that the national security requires sufficient expenditure to kit out a nuclear arsenal able to kill millions of civilians, and fund arms manufacturers to profit from what the UN has labelled a genocide.

Africa and the Middle East are being worst affected by aid cuts, losing out so that the UK can instead increase spending on defence. By your own analysis, the cuts will leave children, people with disabilities and older people more vulnerable across Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zambia and few girls and children will be able to go to school in South Sudan, while programme cuts in Sudan will heavily affect access to health services for women and children.

This approach will have a devastating effect on those communities and countries affected instead of the positive impact which well targeted aid can have. The government is making a choice in slashing bilateral aid to Africa to leave millions without access to basic healthcare, education and urgent humanitarian support, and risk a resurgence of deadly diseases we have spent decades trying to fight and eliminate. It fails to keep anyone safe.

The aid cuts will have a critical effect on climate justice and attempts to address global biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse. Dropping the UK's commitments on international climate finance is short-sighted and contrary to its own national security assessment and advice on food security, and the budget for climate and nature aid. At the G20 summit in Brazil the Prime Minister said that the Labour government would prioritise "the fight against hunger" and would tackle "suffering and starvation", not cut funding to the World Food Programme.

We agree with David Miliband of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), speaking at the IMF and World Bank meetings in Washington DC, when he said that the US "abandoning" its aid programme under Donald Trump would worsen shocks to the global economy and that the supporting the world's poorest was morally the right thing to do and a "good investment for Britain". "It has proved its worth, not because aid buys you friends but because aid is one way in which you align your words and your deeds."

When the UK hosts a summit on development cooperation in 2026 there is an opportunity to lead on debt relief as preparation for chairing the G20 in 2027. The UK could then initiate easing the burden of unsustainable debt, as Gordon Brown highlighted as a key aim of Make Poverty History when he championed it.

¹ ODA allocations for 2026 onwards show the grim reality of UK aid cuts, 24 March 2026, at www.bond.org.uk

16 May 2026

We urge you to restore the commitment to an aid budget of 0.7% GDP and to take the lead on achieving the debt justice for countries in the Global South they require to implement necessary programmes to address climate change and restore health and education services.

Yours in peace

Fiona McOwan, National Secretary, for WILPF UK Executive Committee

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