



The Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senate, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
senator.wong@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister Wong

MEETING TO DISCUSS PALESTINIAN - ISRAELI CRISIS

The Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA) requests an urgent meeting with you to discuss Australia's current position and actions regarding the crisis in Palestine and Israel.

AFOPA is a not-for-profit community organisation based in South Australia which advocates for a just peace for the Palestinian people based on international law and UN resolutions (www.afopa.com.au).

We have a large and diverse supporter base, which is distressed and troubled by the disconnect between the Australian Government's position on the current crisis in Gaza, and that of the Australian people who are showing unprecedented support for Palestinian human rights.

Recent polling of the Australian people* has identified majority support (over 56%) for the Australian Government to call for an immediate ceasefire. 68% of ALP voters in this same poll indicated their support for an immediate ceasefire. In addition, a clear majority (57%) of Australians said the Government should increase pressure on Israel to allow for immediate humanitarian assistance to enter Gaza. According to this poll, 40% believe the Australian Government is favouring Israel.

At AFOPA's Palestine Centre for Peace in the Adelaide CBD, we have been inundated with people phoning, emailing and visiting to voice support for justice for Palestine and offering whatever help they can. People are often grief stricken and sickened by the Israeli atrocities they are seeing on television and on social media. Very many are people who have not interacted with this issue previously. They are also voicing their disquiet with the Australian Government's inability to call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the occupation.

Millions of people around the world are taking to the streets in increasing numbers week after week to bring attention to Israeli violations of international law in Gaza and to highlight the root cause of this humanitarian disaster - the occupation of Palestine. This includes many thousands of Jewish people.

Adelaide has not seen such extraordinary numbers of people taking to the streets over a foreign conflict since the Iraq war. In addition, we are seeing people at the grass roots from different parts of civil society - unions, churches, youth organisations, Arabic and Muslim associations, Jewish groups, charitable groups, health and allied health workers, maritime workers - mobilising in support of the Palestinian cause both here in South Australia and right across the country.

AFOPA has taken sides. We stand firmly on the side of a just peace and the dismantling of the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people. In doing so we stand with the international community, including the vast majority of the United Nations General Assembly and indeed the Secretary of the United Nations himself, António Guterres. The current conflict cannot be resolved without the effective deconstruction of the oppressive conditions faced by the Palestinian people for more than 75 years. Only when the root causes of this current conflict are eliminated can the path to peaceful reconciliation occur.

This is the challenge for the Australian Government: the challenge of how our nation confronts and actively contributes to the resolution of the immediate conflict; the challenge of how our country insists on the pre conditions for a just peace; and the challenge of how the Australian Government reconciles the current disconnect between the values of a democratic Australia and the values of a far-right extremist Israeli government that inflicts injustices on the Palestinian people in every aspect of their lives.

AFOPA seeks an urgent meeting to discuss these challenges with you. We believe that it is only through dialogue and open communication that a way forward can be found. We speak with a clear voice for peace and justice reflecting the interests of the majority of Australians.

We understand you are shortly to visit Israel, therefore, we seek to meet with you in the hope of strengthening our Government's position in working towards a just resolution of the current crisis in Gaza and the root causes of this.

Yours sincerely



Christa Christaki
Chairperson

10 December 2023

*(Roy Morgan Research 18 November 2023)