

## End of year message from AFOPA Chairperson, Christa Christaki

Dear APOPA members and supporters



We are sending you this last newsletter of 2023 with heavy hearts, but with deep gratitude to all of you who have stood with us at AFOPA. Your steadfast support has given us strength and hope during this most difficult of times. Words will never be able to express how grateful we are for your solidarity.

Since the cataclysmic events of October, we have been overwhelmed by your kindness and generosity. Thank you for your emails, phone calls, orders, visits to the Palestine Centre for Peace, donations and offers of volunteer and professional services. On some days when we were running on empty, you kept us going.

Thank you to the members who have renewed your membership and those who have joined us as members and subscribers. With the help of our wonderful volunteers, online orders have finally been able to be fulfilled. We still haven't managed to answer all the thousands of emails and offers of assistance received. We will, and hope you understand.

We have been inspired by the mobilisation of so many people at rallies, and the activation of a multitude of initiatives from the grassroots. Palestinian, Muslim and Arab groups, human rights organisations, unionists, doctors, nurses, university and high school students and ordinary Australians from all walks of life, have mobilised and organised in an enormous show of support for the people of Gaza. We will continue to build on this extraordinary momentum.

While the Israeli genocidal war on Gaza continues to wreak death and destruction on the Palestinian people, Australia's leaders continue to lack the moral courage to reassess Australia's relationship with the apartheid state of Israel. This is shameful and intolerable.

In solidarity with the people of Gaza, Palestinian leaders of Christian denominations came together in Bethlehem and made a unanimous decision to cancel public Christmas celebrations. The Church of the Nativity, famous for its grotto marking the location where Christians believe Jesus was born, normally bustling with thousands of people, is empty. A short walk away, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has placed the baby Jesus wrapped in a keffiyeh in the centre of broken cement to symbolise children being pulled from the rubble.



Many of us are not feeling the Christmas or holiday spirit this year. Many of you have told us that your Christmas will be muted and that your thoughts will be with the people of Gaza. Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones. And never lose hope.

As millions of people who are taking to the streets around the world are demonstrating, it is we, the People, who will force change. In this we remain tireless and resolute. Together, we will amplify the voices of Palestinians for justice and a free Palestine.

**Christa Christaki**  
**Chairperson**  
**December 2023**

## Update on AFOPA activities since the August 2023 AGM (see report – live link)

October this year marked the busiest and most distressing time in AFOPA's 19-year history. Before this, we were already flat out working on significant upcoming events, developing our networks, executing political campaigns and managing our messaging through our website and social media platforms.

### Antony Loewenstein Book Launch

In September, we hosted the Adelaide book launch of Antony Loewenstein's *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports The Technology Of Occupation Around The World*. This in-conversation event with AFOPA's Executive Committee member, Mike Khizam was enthusiastically supported by AFOPA members. Antony described the widespread commercialization and brutal deployment globally of Israel's occupation enforcing technologies, and discussed his global investigation that revealed how, as ethno-nationalism grows, Israel has built the ultimate tools for despots and democracies. It was a chilling precursor to what was to happen a month later in Gaza. Since then, Antony's brave work has been awarded the prestigious 2023 Walkley Book Award.



### Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967: Edward Said memorial Lecture and tour of Australia and New Zealand

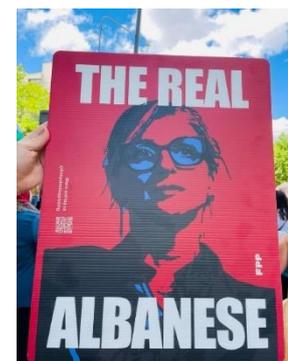
Magnetic, magnanimous, indefatigable, brilliant, energetic, professional, committed, generous, factual, charismatic, passionate. These were just some of the superlatives used to describe AFOPA's 2023 Edward Said Memorial Lecture (ESML) speaker, Francesca Albanese UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967.



Francesca arrived in Australia a few weeks into Israel's war on Gaza. While it was the worst of times, it was also the best of times for the Special Rapporteur to be in Australia. With her extensive understanding of the day-to-day realities for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, her expert knowledge of International Law, and Israel's violations of International Law, Francesca provided a compelling alternative narrative to that expressed by the Australian Government and the media. Her ESML lecture was a triumph of factual truth telling based on her experiences on the ground within the framework of International Law.

During her 16-day Australian/New Zealand tour organised by AFOPA, Francesca appeared at 35 events ranging from meetings with state and federal politicians, public lectures, university lectures, dinners, round tables with Palestinian groups, Jewish groups, non-government organisations, First Nations communities, senior public servants, academic staff at a number of universities and unions.

In addition, high profile media appearances were organised, including an interview with the ABC News Network, Q&A and a live nationally televised appearance at the National Press Club where the Special Rapporteur



perfectly demonstrated how to deal with a hostile media without falling into someone else's narrative. In the end, Francesca's 13 planned media appearances turned into 30, all of which she handled with straight talking and poise.

### **Miko Peled**



We were also fortunate to host Miko Peled on 12 December. Miko was in Australia for a for just a few days and within 24 hours we were able to organise a speaking event at the Islamic Society of South Australia's (ISSA) Al Salam Community Centre. Thank you to ISSA, the Adelaide Sisters Association, Glimmer of Hope and Health Workers 4 Palestine for helping to attract nearly 200 people to this event in such a short space of time.

Miko Peled is an Israeli American activist and author who grew up in a prominent Zionist family. During his presentation Miko spoke eloquently about why a two-states solution is not and has never been possible, and about why the only solution is a single secular democratic state with equal rights for all its citizens.