



15 November 2023

Ambassador's Speech

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at Federal Parliament House

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land and pay my respects to their Elders past and present, and to all First Nations people here with us today.

I would also like to sincerely thank the United Nations Information Centre, the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, and the Council of Arab Ambassadors for their efforts towards today's event. I welcome our distinguished speakers, His Excellency the Ambassador of Indonesia, the Chair of the OIC Heads of Missions Group, Mr Chris Sidoti, and Ms Francesca Albanese.

The United Nations Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an important occasion to reaffirm and show our solidarity and support for the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza, and to acknowledge their firm resilience and steadfastness against the brutal inhumanity of the Israeli occupation.

History did not begin on the 7th of October. The root causes and historical context of this current crisis cannot be ignored or undermined. For 75 years, Israel has only used force, persecution, collective punishment and apartheid to advance its colonization of Palestinian territory and deny the Palestinian people their fundamental rights.

The current catastrophic situation is the direct result of the failure of the international community to hold Israel accountable for its crimes against the Palestinian people and ensure the realisation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

In just one month, Israel's vicious military offensive against the defenceless civilian population of Gaza has stolen **over 11,000 lives**, mostly women and children. 1,755 children are missing, buried somewhere beneath the rubble. The World Health Organisation has recorded **at least 137** attacks by Israel on healthcare in Gaza so far, and the Director-General warns that *"The world cannot be silent while hospitals, which should be safe havens, are transformed into scenes of death, devastation and despair."*

These are people, not just numbers. Each Palestinian life lost was a person, an individual and a human being with their own hopes, memories, talents, and loved ones who will never forget them.

Israel's war is not on Hamas, but on the entire Palestinian people. With all eyes on Gaza, Israel has been mass arresting and detaining Palestinians, including children, every day in the West Bank. Since 7 October Israeli occupation forces and extremist Jewish settlers have **killed 181** Palestinians in the West Bank, including **47 children**. We are witnessing the consequences of allowing power and naked power to prevail over justice and international law.



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Israel's violations against the Palestinian people in Gaza are unjustifiable, criminal breaches of international law and Israel's obligations as an occupying power, **not acts of self-defence**.

We call on the Australian Government to support an immediate ceasefire and uninterrupted access of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and to condemn Israel's illegal evacuation orders and forcible transfer of the civilian population in Gaza.

Mutual respect and harmony among all components of Australian society are essential and must be protected. Islamophobia and antisemitism are unacceptable and unjustifiable. Israel wants to drag us into a religious war, but this is not a religious conflict. This is a political struggle between the occupying power and the occupied, the coloniser and the colonised.

This is Israel's sixth war on the Gaza Strip. There is no military solution to this conflict. There must be a political horizon that ends the suffering of the Palestinian people by ending the occupation and responding to their natural right to self-determination in a sovereign, democratic, and independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, according to the principles of international law and international legitimacy.

For 75 years, Israel has attempted to displace, erase, and replace the Palestinian people. For 75 years they have failed. The Palestinian people throughout the homeland and the diaspora remain resilient and steadfast in our resistance. We refuse to be erased and we refuse to be silenced.

To quote the Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan Kanafani:

"Everything in this world can be robbed and stolen, except one thing; This one thing is the love that emanates from a human being towards a solid commitment to a conviction or cause."

Thank you.

