



14 March 2019



Middle East and Africa Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Canberra

Dear [REDACTED],

I write to you today concerning the upcoming discussion of Agenda Item 7 (Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories) at the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). In the spirit of human rights, international law and Australia's own prior commitments, I urge the government to consider seriously and to engage actively in the discussion of Item 7.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Item 7 is not about singling out Israel. Rather, it is about acknowledging the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and dignity, which is accorded to them by international law. Naturally, this entails spotlighting the impediments to its realisation. I hear and understand Australia's argument that Item 7 is exceptional and tiresome, but I must insist on engagement with it as it addresses an equally exceptional and protracted human rights crisis.

To the extent that Australia takes seriously the pledge it made upon its accession to the UNHRC in 2018, especially the part about upholding indigenous peoples' rights, it ought to give careful consideration to at least two specific resolutions under Item 7, even if it maintains that the Item itself is unfairly anti-Israel and discredited – the resolutions a) acknowledging the Palestinian right to self-determination, and b) condemning Israel's illegal settlement project in the West Bank. The latter condemns not only Israel's land theft and settler-colonialism as roadblocks to a two-state peace, but also, and arguably more importantly, its ongoing attempts to erase an indigenous people's identity and to supplant them in their own homeland. Accusations that the Council is biased and ineffective, should, I believe, be set aside at least in this instance to consider these resolutions on their merits, and also how consistent Australia would like to be in honouring its own pledges.

As a self-proclaimed international human rights advocate, which has articulated a special commitment to the human rights of indigenous peoples, I ask that Australia remember its stated pillars and priorities for engagement in the Council. These are the values that are true of Australia and Australian society, not the faux 'principles' used to justify boycotting and disengagement. I thus compel Australia to participate actively in the discussion of Item 7, and to support Palestinian human rights in this context.

With warm regards,

Izzat Abdulhadi
Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific

