



Media Release

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Withdrawal of Australian aid to the Palestinian Authority

Following Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's decision yesterday to withdraw Australia's annual contribution to the Palestinian Authority over allegations that it enables or encourages politically motivated violence, we wish to express our deepest disappointment and concern.

This is a decision that follows months of anti-Palestine rhetoric and tendentious cherry-picking in the Australian government and media, and so while certainly deflating, it is not surprising. What's most disappointing, though, is that Minister Bishop's decision is not evidence-based, but rather a result of empty claims and speculation. The World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund's safeguards and stringent auditing procedures ensure accountability, and nothing has pointed to Australia's contribution supporting anything other than that for which it was intended. Prior to this announcement, all parties were satisfied that Australian aid was being appropriately channeled into the salaries of health and education professionals in these ministries. The paper trail confirms this. We have therefore concluded that this decision is political in nature, for its justification has no grounding in facts. Whether it be to soothe factional tensions, meet electoral demands, or to simply appease a strong and formidable lobby, it has less to do with genuine concerns about terrorism and the stifled peace process than it does with domestic political expediency.

To invoke a concern for peace and security while ignoring Israel's ever-expanding colonial project (not only of land theft, but settler intimidation, restrictions on movement and dual legal systems), the Australian government has again apportioned all blame to only one side, the much weaker and disenfranchised one at that.

This decision comes at a time when the Trump administration is pursuing an alternative road map to peace, which will substitute a 'humanitarian' solution for the long-held and legitimate right of Palestinians to self-determination.

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