

Australia should not welcome the Prime Minister of Israel

We strongly oppose the official visit to Australia of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel continues to defy all United Nations calls for it to comply with international law in respect of its illegal settlement building, and its treatment of the indigenous Palestinian population.

Instead, over the last 50 years, Israel has held the people of Palestine under military occupation and:

- continues to illegally build settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem;
- continues to confiscate Palestinian land;
- continues to demolish Palestinian homes;
- continues its policy of imprisonment of Palestinians without trial even of children as young as 12; and
- continues its blockade of the 1.8 million civilian inhabitants of Gaza.

Those actions are not symbolic of a nation desirous of building peace with its neighbours. Those policies build understandable resentment, anger and desperation amongst Palestinians.

We want all Israelis and Palestinians to have peace and freedom; we oppose all forms of terrorism and criminal violence by either side. We recognise when there is a gross imbalance of power, conflict will never be resolved. Mr Netanyahu's policies consistently aim to provoke, intimidate and oppress the Palestinian population which increase that imbalance, thus taking Israel irretrievably further from peace. These policies are inconsistent with Australian values and beliefs and we should not welcome him here.

The Australian Government needs to rethink its one-sided support for the Israeli Government. We are appalled that our Government opposes the recent UN Security Council resolution supporting the application of international law to Israel and Palestine, when most nations, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France and New Zealand, support it. Even the USA did not oppose it. It is time for the suffering of the Palestinian people to stop and for Australia to take a more balanced role in supporting the application of international law and not supporting Mr Netanyahu and his policies.

Signatories

Gavan Griffith QC, former Solicitor General

The Honourable Murray Rutledge Wilcox, AO, QC, former Federal Court Judge

Julian Burnside AO, QC

John Karkar QC

Paul Heywood Smith QC

Claire O'Connor SC

Janet Holmes-à-Court, AC

Jon Stanhope, ACT Chief Minister 2001-2011

The Hon Alan Griffin, former Labor Minister

The Hon Melissa Parke, former federal member for Fremantle and lawyer for the United Nations in Gaza

Jill Hall, Former member for Shortland

Laurie Ferguson, Former member for Werriwa

Hon. Sandra Kanck, Former Member of the South Australian Legislative Council

Ms Miriam Margolyes OBE, Actor

Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, Writer and academic

Sara Dowse, Writer

Samah Sabawi, Author, Playwright and PhD candidate Victoria University

Bishop George Browning, Former Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, APAN President

Rev Gregor Henderson AM, Past President, Uniting Church in Australia

Associate Professor Peter Slezak, Independent Australian Jewish Voices

Dr Peter Manning, journalist, academic and author

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Christina Wilcox, filmmaker

Sara Saleh, media commentator and human rights activist

Dr Jacinda Woodhead, Editor, *Overland* magazine

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