



12 October 2023

Joint Statement by Australian Muslims to Speak Up and End the Double Standards in the Commentary on Palestine

We, the Imams, Sheikhs, Mosques, and Muslim community organisations of Australia write this joint statement to:

- a. raise our deep concern about the grave situation in Palestine;
- b. strongly reject and address the one-sided portrayal of the Palestinian issue in Australia; and
- c. condemn all calls and incitement to violence and hatred of any people. This includes conduct that is anti-semitic, anti-Muslim or Islamophobic, and expressions of hatred.

To political leaders, including the Australian, State and Territory Governments, and media representatives:

- 1. Israeli troops are amassing at the border to enter Gaza and engage in further killing of people, including civilians. A total blockade has also been announced. As a consequence, at least 2.2 million Palestinian people will not have access to water, electricity, food or fuel. The civilian casualties and suffering of the Palestinian people will dramatically worsen. We call to peace and an end to occupation. Occupation is illegal under international law.**
- 2. There is never a justification for any loss of innocent civilian lives. This must be a universal constant and hold true for every life, including the lives of Palestinians who continue to suffer and experience the worsening humanitarian crisis they are about to endure. This cannot be overlooked or ignored. Regrettably, it has.**
3. In the recent conflict, at least 700 Palestinian people have been killed and over 5000 injured. An additional 17 Palestinians, including four children were killed, and 295 were injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank. Mass displacement has escalated in the past 24 hours across the Gaza Strip, reaching over 187,518, and is expected to increase further. Over 137,427 of the displaced people are taking shelter in schools. About 3,000 Palestinians in Gaza are still displaced following previous escalations.
4. Palestine is the home of Masjid al-Aqsa, the second house of worship (after the Holy Mosque – Kaba – in Mecca) to be built on earth and the first of the directions of prayer (*qibla*) in Islam.
5. Muslims, locally and globally, cannot separate the issue of Palestine from the religion and faith of Islam. God Almighty says in the Quran, the last revelation to mankind:

“Glory be to the One Who took His servant (Muhammad) by night from the Sacred Mosque (Makkah) to the al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem) whose surroundings We have blessed, so that We may show him some of Our signs. Indeed, He alone is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.”

Quran 17:1

6. Occupation for the past seventy-five years of a sovereign land, the ethnic cleansing and oppression of an indigenous people, and the usurping of land in the name of 'settlements' is a common thread behind the creation of the Zionist state of Israel and many other countries that were a by-product of colonialism.
7. **Palestinians, like Aboriginal people in Australia, are indigenous to their respective lands. This truth should be particularly recognised by Australia and its citizens familiar with the historical injustice of "Terra Nullius." This Latin phrase was used to justify the dispossession, forced displacement, and inhumane treatment of First Nations Peoples in Australia. This Latin term means "land belonging to no one" and has been interpreted as a complete absence of people as well as the absence of "civilised" people capable of land ownership.**
8. Israel is the product of a British Mandate that **promised a land without a people to a people without a land**. A Zionist project that, for the last seventy-five years, has **wiped out entire villages from the Palestinian map** and **ethnically cleansed** over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes.
9. As the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé states: "The **solution** for occupation is the **end of occupation**, the invading military goes back to its country, but this is not the situation either in the West Bank or in Israel or Gaza Strip. This is colonization... it started colonising it in the late 19th century and is still colonising it today."

OUR DISMAY AT POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

10. **Indigenous** peoples, **wherever they may be in the world**, deserve the same respect. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the Australian Government was quick to condemn the illegal occupation, and even sent military assistance to the occupied territory. As a symbolic gesture of solidarity, the Sydney Opera House and the Parliament House in Canberra were illuminated with the colours of the Ukrainian flag in March 2022, demonstrating support for a nation that was subjected to invasion and occupation.
11. On Monday 9 October 2023, the people of New South Wales and the world witnessed the **double standards** in Australia when it saw the **colours of the invading, colonising, occupying force** - Israel - shining on the symbolic, public icon we know as the Sydney Opera House.
12. Today, we express our dismay at the remarks of the Prime Minister when he said: *'Australia stands with our friend Israel in this time... We recognise Israel's right to defend itself.'* We respond by saying **you are supporting the right of an occupying force, a colonial 'settler' and 'invader', to sustain a 75-year invasion of Palestine and a 16-year illegal and inhumane siege on Gaza.**
13. The statement "Israel has a right to defend itself" is an egregious denial of justice and fairness to Palestinians. Does not any person have the right to defend themselves against an aggressor? Such a statement misrepresents the true nature of the situation and portrays Palestinians as perpetual aggressors. The consequence of such a statement is the enabling of Israel to perform any action unchecked and unrestrained while denying fundamental rights to the Palestinians. Language is crucial in all matters, and if we get the language wrong here, are we not aiding the true aggressor?
14. On the one hand, there is support for a Voice for Indigenous Australians, and on the other hand, you openly recognise the right of an illegal, occupying, colonising force of Zionism to continue its illegal invasion of a sovereign land and people.

15. The government's double standard maneuvering that is selective in its support of some Indigenous peoples and not others is of concern. **The way to peace is not through further entrenching oppression and occupation but by ending it.**
16. The Australian Muslim Community are nearly one million strong and is dismayed by the one-sided narrative allowing the Zionist lobby to sway Government decisions on Palestine. We call on the Government to acknowledge the plight and suffering of the Palestinians and avoid one-sided statements and support which ignore the Palestinian people.

SOLIDARITY WITH OUR IMAMS AND MOSQUES

17. Celebrating the loss of innocent life, wherever and whoever that may be, is deplorable. It is regrettable that certain media outlets and politicians took the words of an Imam entirely out of context from his speech at Lakemba on Sunday, 8 October 2023. Throughout his entire speech, the Imam makes no reference to innocent lives lost. He solely highlights Palestinians breaking free from the Israeli blockade that has imprisoned them for 16 years.
18. At no point does the Muslim community embrace, accept or support the loss of innocent life. Unfortunately, the media failed to report his concluding remarks, which provided the necessary context: *"...because this is the first time that Palestinians have broken free from the largest open-air prison on earth."*
19. At no point does the Imam embrace, accept or support the loss of innocent life. Unfortunately, the media failed to report his concluding remarks, which provided the necessary context: *"...because this is the first time that Palestinians have broken free from the largest open-air prison on earth."*
20. We deplore the media coverage and the rhetoric used to incite anti-Palestinian sentiments

THE WAY FORWARD

21. We call upon all our Mosques, Islamic centres, Islamic schools, and institutions of learning and well-being to dedicate the next month to hosting forums and events whereby the community can attend and learn about the authentic history of Palestine and the Islamic significance of Masjid al-Aqsa and its surrounding lands.
22. We express the **clear distinction between political Zionism, which is abhorrent**, and Judaism and the Jewish people who deserve our **kindness and respect** as brothers and sisters in humanity. We **do not condone** any activity that spreads hatred and division amongst the people of Australia. Rather, we implore upon our fellow Australians to be proponents of peace and cohesion, engaging in civil dialogue on issues that affect us all.
23. **We condemn all calls and incitement to violence or hatred** and call upon our elected government representatives in Australia to cease their imbalanced approach. We recognise the sacredness of life and condemn taking innocent lives.
24. **Australia should be pursuing avenues of peace and restraint when navigating civil conflicts**, rather than supporting a decision to light up the Sydney Opera House and Parliament House Canberra with the colours of a colonising, invading, Zionist occupying regime.

25. In response, **we encourage as many Mosques as possible in Australia to be lit up with the colours of the Palestinian flag: red, black, and green.** Alternatively, we encourage the display of banners in support of **Free Palestine** at our Mosques since Masjid al-Aqsa is the heart of Palestine and the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was asked, *'If one of us cannot visit it (Masjid al-Aqsa), what should we do?'* He, peace be upon him, said: *'Then he should make a gift of some oil to be lit therein (in its lamps). For indeed the one who gifts this to it, will be like the one who has prayed therein'.* [Reported by Imam Ahmad]
26. We encourage our community to continue to engage in intellectual discourse with elected politicians and point out that the Zionist occupying force continues to expand its illegal occupation and 'settlements' in contravention of International Law and repeated UN Resolutions.
27. We encourage our Muslim brethren to escalate their **supplication to God** during these times and to recite the special supplication [*dua*] known as *Qunut al-Nazilah*, which can be said after standing up again from the last bowing (*ruku'*) in the obligatory prayers – citing prayers of granting freedom and support for our brothers and sisters in Palestine.
28. We, the Imams, Sheikhs and congregations of the Australian Muslim Community, will not allow such bias and double standard to pass without being called out for what it is: You are the Government elected by all Australians to uphold both Australian and UN-agreed basic human rights.
29. Why has the Australian Government not addressed the elephant in the room? Why has it not called out Israel both now and in the past over its violent suppression of Palestinian resistance? Why has it not sanctioned Israel for its violation of UN resolutions?
30. Why has the Australian Government constantly sided with the United States and Israel in the UN when the world seeks to stop the Israeli violation of UN resolutions, the massacre of Palestinian people, the illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian, and the illegal land grab of the Golan Heights and Sheeba Farms?
31. Enough is enough. The voice of Australian Muslims and proponents of justice for all people will no longer be silenced on the matter of Palestine.
32. We, the Imams and Muslims of Australia, ask God Almighty to grant freedom to our brothers and sisters in Palestine, where they are freed from the prison of occupation and colonialism, and grant our Indigenous brothers and sisters in Australia a true voice to rise from the intergenerational trauma they have experienced for over two centuries because of colonialism.

To become a signatory to this joint statement, or for enquiries, contact: Gamel Kheir at gkheir@lma.org.au

This statement is supported by our communities and these organisations.



1. Australian National Imams Council
2. Muslim Women Australia
3. Alliance of Australian Muslims
4. Lebanese Muslim Association
5. Islamic Council of Victoria
6. Islamic Council of New South Wales
7. Islamic Society of South Australia
8. Council of Imams NSW
9. Board of Imams Victoria
10. Council of Imams ACT
11. Queensland Muslims Inc.
12. United Muslims NSW
13. Australian Palestinian Community Council
14. Newcastle Muslim Association (Newcastle Mosque)
15. United Muslims of Australia
16. Shifa Institute
17. Roselands Mosque Association
18. Hurstville Mosque
19. Sydney Northwest Muslim Community
20. Quakers Hill Mosque
21. Glenhaven Mosque
22. Gallipoli Turkish Cultural Foundation Limited
23. Western Sydney Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre Inc.
24. Sydney Turkish Islamic Culture and Mosque Association Incorporated
25. Redfern Islamic Society Inc.
26. Bonnyrigg Turkish Islamic Cultural Association Incorporated
27. Islamic Society of Illawarra
28. NSW United Turkish Islamic Centre Inc.
29. Granville Youth Association
30. Masjid As-sunnah
31. Roselands Mosque
32. Rahilah
33. AMUST (Australasian Muslim Times)
34. Seena Incorporated
35. Sefton Mosque
36. OnePath Network
37. Australian Islamic House
38. Sydney University Muslim Students Association
39. UTS Muslim Society
40. Western Sydney MSA Campbelltown
41. WSMSA Parramatta
42. Western Sydney University Muslim Students' Association
43. Macquarie University Muslim Students' Association
44. Muhajirin Association for Community Development Inc.
45. Stand With Kashmir
46. Werribee Islamic Center
47. Melbourne Grand Mosque
48. AuLanka Muslim Association
49. Muslim Legal Network
50. Auburn Islamic Community Centre
51. ASWJ Australia
52. Daar Ibn Abbas Condell Park
53. Islamic Society of Victoria (Preston Mosque)
54. Masjid Qubaa