



17 May 2024

From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free

We oppose the motion passed yesterday in the Senate that condemns the phrase “*from river to the sea, Palestine will be free*”. It is entirely misconceived and based on an incorrect understanding of the phrase.

Historically, this phrase has been associated with the Palestinian cause for self-determination and statehood. The phrase is rooted in an aspiration for freedom for all people, irrespective of their background, faith or nationality. It is a vision that encompasses the right of all individuals to live in peace and dignity within the lands stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

It should not be controversial that Palestinians reject their oppression or aspire to their own liberation and life in their homeland, free from Israel’s racist systems and laws of control.

According to the University of Toronto’s Hearing Palestine Initiative, an academic initiative that explores the history, culture, and collective memory of Palestine and Palestinians, ‘*for Palestinian movements the slogan is not primarily a political program (e.g., two-state solution, one-state solution, confederation, etc.), but rather a Palestinian expression for liberation, freedom, and equality given the on-going context of colonization and military occupation.*’

What should be controversial is that the Senate motion, moved by Senator Birmingham, is using the words of Palestinians against Palestinians, and is in essence telling them that the colonisation of Palestinian land is not enough – now the words, meaning and political imagination of Palestinians must also be silenced. Such a distortion of the phrase and its condemnation also distracts from a genocide which is unfolding.

It is disconcerting and disappointing that our political leaders are seemingly more engaged with, and concerned about, the alleged distress conveyed by lobby groups rather than the actual genocide which is being committed against Palestinians in Gaza and the prevention of humanitarian aid to them.

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Signed and endorsed by the following organisations:

Australian National Imams Council
 Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
 Jewish Council of Australia
 Muslim Women Australia
 Australian Muslim Advocacy Network
 Australia Palestine Advocacy Network
 Palestinian Christians in Australia

Council of Imams NSW
 Islamic Council of NSW
 Islamic Council of Victoria
 Lebanese Muslim Association
 The Islamic Society of South Australia
 Queensland Muslims Incorporated
 Muslim Legal Network

United Muslims of Australia (UMA)
 United Muslims of NSW
 ACT Muslim Association
 United Muslims of Northern Territory
 Board of Imams Victoria
 Islamic Schools Association of Australia (ISAA)