



**Edmund Rice Centre**  
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

## **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

### **May 2025 No.126**

Dear Friends,

This is the 126th Edition of ERCJCE Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations, refugees and people seeking asylum and environmental justice.

As we welcome our new Pope Leo XIV into our sad and troubled world, let us all pray that he is strengthened and sustained by the love of Christ.

In his first address Pope Leo referred to the peace of Christ as “an unarmed and disarming peace, humble and persevering.”

As Edmund Rice people may we always remember this and also live by Blessed Edmund Rice's three main tenets: **PRESENCE COMPASSION & LIBERATION**

*“We must have courage—determination—to go on with the task of becoming free—not only for ourselves, but for the nation and the world.” Rosa Parks*

Please note that if you come up against a paywall in "any of the articles below - please contact me at: [mmcinerney@edmundrice.org](mailto:mmcinerney@edmundrice.org) and I will send you the full article.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace & Blessings  
Marita  
Communications Project Officer,  
Marita McInerney

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.*



*The National Reconciliation Week (NRW) 2025 theme, **Bridging Now to Next**, reflects the ongoing connection between past, present and future.*

Bridging Now to Next calls on all Australians to step forward together, to look ahead and continue the push forward as past lessons guide us.

In the #NRW2025 theme artwork created by Kalkadoon woman Bree Buttenshaw, native plants – which are known for regenerating after fire and thriving through adversity – symbolise our collective strength and the possibilities of renewal. This is a time for growth, reflection, and commitment to walking together.

Australia's history of reconciliation is not a linear one, we have made great strides and experienced disappointing setbacks.

Twenty-five years ago, Corroboree 2000 brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous leaders in a historic call for reconciliation. We continue that work in 2025, inviting all Australians to join us in Bridging Now to Next – building a more united and respectful nation.

### ***What is National Reconciliation Week?***

National Reconciliation Week—held every year from 27 May to 3 June—is a time for all Australians to about our shared histories, cultures, and

achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

### ***What's the significance of 27 May and 3 June?***

27 May marks the anniversary of the 1967 referendum when Australians voted to remove clauses in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

3 June marks the historic 1992 Mabo decision in which the High Court of Australia recognised native title—the recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights over their lands did survive British colonisation.

The day before National Reconciliation Week, 26 May, is National Sorry Day, which was first held in Sydney in 1998 and is now commemorated nationally to remember and honour the Stolen Generations.

### ***What is reconciliation in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?***

At its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia's colonial history is characterised by devastating land dispossession, violence and racism. Over the last half-century, however, many significant steps towards reconciliation have been taken.

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey that reminds us that while generations of Australians have fought hard for meaningful change, future gains are likely to take just as much, if not more, effort.

### ***Why is National Reconciliation Week important?***

National Reconciliation Week provides a focus for working towards our goal of a just, equitable and reconciled Australia

National Reconciliation Week is an ideal time for organisations, schools, universities, community groups and workplaces to advance understanding of reconciliation within their own places and their own lives. National Reconciliation Week provides a focus for working towards our goal of a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

It began as a Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993, supported by Australia's major religious groups. Three years later it evolved into National Reconciliation Week under the guidance of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (now Reconciliation Australia).

### **Full information re NRW:**

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/>



Former Western Australian Labor senator Pat Dodson says Australia's rate of Aboriginal incarceration are 'an assault on the Aboriginal people'. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

## **'Genocide': Patrick Dodson condemns Australia's Aboriginal youth incarceration rates**

***Sarah Collard, The Guardian, 31st June 2025***

### ***Former Labor senator also says child removals are a way to 'eradicate a people from the landscape'***

Former Labor senator Patrick Dodson has condemned the country's Aboriginal youth incarceration rates and child removals as an ongoing genocide against First Peoples and an "embarrassing sore" on the nation.

"It's an assault on the Aboriginal people. I don't say that lightly [but] if you want to eradicate a people from the landscape, you start taking them away, you start destroying the landscape of their cultural heritage, you attack their children or remove their children," Dodson said.

***"This is a way to get rid of a people."***

***Dodson said there was no other word for it than genocide.***

"It's to destroy any semblance of any representation, manifestation in our nation that there's a unique people in this country who are called the First Peoples," he said.

The Yawuru elder, whose traditional country centres around Broome, spoke to Guardian Australia before the release of his Reconciliation Memoirs, an annual event held by Reconciliation Australia in which they produce the memoirs of a longstanding champion of the reconciliation movement.

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Often referred to as the “father of reconciliation”, Dodson has tracked these worsening statistics in his decades in public life. He served as a commissioner on the 1989 royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody, as chair of both the Central Land Council and the Kimberley Land Council, and as co-chair of the parliamentary inquiry into constitutional recognition, before being nominated for the Senate in 2016.

Dodson said that the process of examining his long legacy in public life allowed him to reflect on the unfinished business of reconciliation, in a country that is yet to reckon with the legacy of colonisation and dispossession, and yet to afford First Nations people an equitable seat at the table.

“It’s a great country, but it’s just that the First Peoples are not enjoying a lot of the greatness,” Dodson said.

“We should pick up and resolve these issues that are a blight on us as a nation. Our relationship with the First Peoples has not been settled, has not been agreed to between First Peoples and the nation and we’ve got to do that.”

**Read full article:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/may/29/genocide-patrick-dodson-condemns-australias-aboriginal-youth-incarceration-rates?>



## **Voice rejection sends Australia backwards**

***Henry Reynolds, Pearls & Irritations, 18 May 2025***

It was a dramatic return to the political stage! With the election underway, indigenous activist Noel Pearson broke a self-imposed silence which he had kept for 18 months since the failure of the referendum on the voice to parliament.

The Weekend Australian devoted its front page to the story with the heading:

“‘Dog’ act; Pearson Unleashes On All.” He lamented the long-term effect of the failed campaign. These 18 months, he declared, had been the “most forlorn in the history of Indigenous affairs”. All political capital on behalf of Indigenous Australians had been spent — the account was indeed overdrawn — and as a result there was no prospect for anything in the remainder of the government’s first term. He was doubtful if there would be any relevant progress in the second term.

His assessment was pessimistic. Indeed, Australia has retreated from standards that have become widely accepted internationally in the last 30 years. The global praise, and even admiration, that came in the wake of the High Court’s Mabo judgment in 1992 has long been forgotten. The government’s decision to concentrate on investment to improve living conditions and thereby “close the gap”, while welcome, is a throwback to the practical reconciliation of John Howard. And one can go back even further to the assimilationist policies of Paul Hasluck, c.1955, which were premised on the improvement of Indigenous health, education and housing.

The paradox of the failure to gain a Voice to Parliament was that it was such a modest proposal as Pearson himself appreciated. A permanent parliamentary advisory committee was far from innovative.

All Australian Parliaments have clusters of them. And Indigenous advisory committees have been part of the political landscape since the 1970s. This raises the question of why Albanese chose to take up that part of the Uluru Statement when there were far more substantial questions left hanging — truth-telling, for instance, treaty-making and the abiding question of sovereignty. These were being seriously presented to prime minister Bob Hawke who promised to begin negotiations for a treaty within the life of that Parliament. One has to wonder if anyone in Albanese’s previous, or new ministry, has ever given serious consideration to these questions or will turn their attention to them over the next three years. As Pearson observed, they were never mentioned during the election campaign.

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One feature of the referendum that was scarcely noticed in Australia was that the failure was widely reported overseas – in Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific. The country was being judged and the assessment was almost universal. Australia had been offered the chance to cast off its colonial past and had failed to do so. The old White Australia was resurgent. The promise of the past generation had been squandered. Racist inflected ridicule was riding high. Many Australians would not accept these pointed criticisms. But there was little in the story that could be presented with pride. The First Nation’s community had been commissioned by both government and Opposition to carry out a



survey of Indigenous opinion all over the continent. It was an investigation of unprecedented scale.

Sovereignty was at the centre of the Statement and it won't go away. It remains there as the central legal and political inheritance left over from the era of British colonialism. We seem to lack the will to shed this burden. However, the Indigenous position was clearly set out for our consideration:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait tribes were the first sovereign nations of the Australian continent... and possessed it under our own laws and customs.

It has never been ceded or extinguished and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for 60 millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last 200 years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

**Read full article:**

<https://johnmenadue.com/post/2025/05/voice-rejection-sends-australia-backwards/>



## **Media Release: This is Not the Act of a Friend**

***Thursday 29 May 2025, Sydney***

For six years, Woodside Energy's proposal to extend the lifetime of Australia's largest oil and gas project, the North West Shelf gas project, to 2070, sat waiting for the assessment of the Australian government. Yesterday, the government's new Labor Environment Minister Murray Watt approved the extension of the gas project for another 45 years.

For 'Alopi Latukefu, the Director of the Global Centre for Social Justice Advocacy and Leadership, this is a disappointing decision for future generations, for whom we have a duty of care, and for Australia's Pacific family: "If we take our starting position of listening to the Pacific Island leaders and their call to address the existential threat of climate change, and work back on what are the ways to achieve real policy and systems shift, it starts and ends with decisions on the use of fossil fuels and their availability in the world."

"When arguments are made in relation to the supply of gas as a development

issue, or energy security concerns, or even the cost of energy in Australia, we need to always ask ourselves at what cost will this come, and who will bear the brunt of the impacts of these decisions.”

“The Minister should be making a decision based on the need to take responsibility - for the environment, to protect Murujuga’s ancient rock carvings, but also for future generations in Australia, and, more immediately, for our neighbours throughout the Blue Pacific whose choices tomorrow will hinge on decisions we make today.” According to Australia’s Climate Council, Woodside Energy’s North West Shelf gas project will release “4.4 billion tonnes of climate pollution over its lifetime, twice as much as the Coalition’s now-abandoned nuclear scheme, and equivalent to more than a decade of Australia’s annual emissions”.

‘Alopi Latukefu said: “This is not a decision made in the interest of our region, the world or in fact the long-term interest of Australia. Reducing our own emissions while exporting billions of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to the rest of the world is not being a responsible family member and friend to the Pacific. As our Prime Minister said in response to President Trump’s Liberation Day announcement on tariffs, during the last Federal election campaign:

***‘This is not the act of a friend’.***”

**For more information, please contact:**

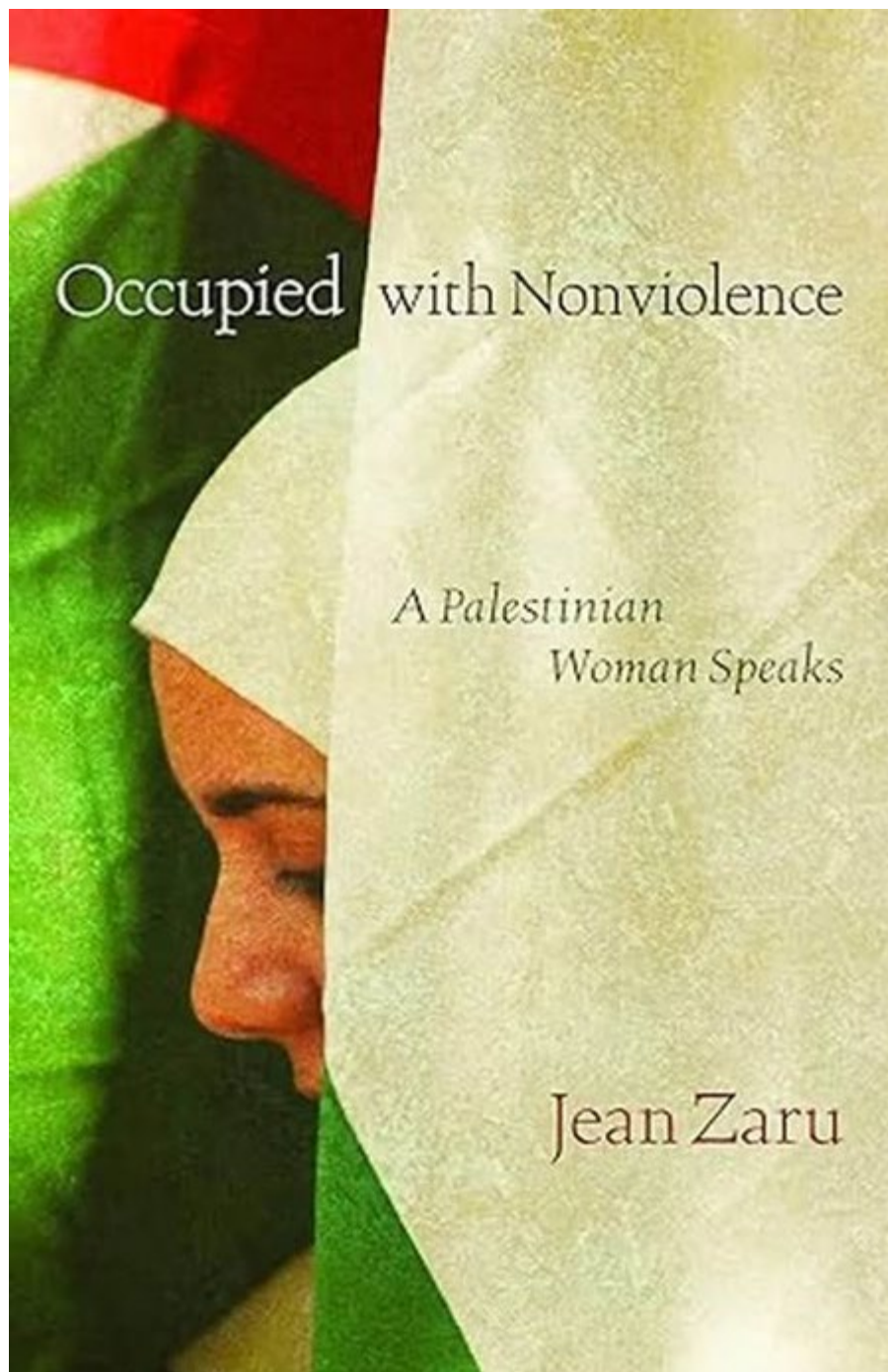
*‘Alopi Latukefu*

Director, The Global Centre for Social Justice Advocacy and Leadership  
(formerly the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education)

Email: [alatukefu@edmundrice.org](mailto:alatukefu@edmundrice.org)

**Link:** [https://www.erc.org.au/media\\_release\\_this\\_is\\_not\\_the\\_act\\_of\\_a\\_friend](https://www.erc.org.au/media_release_this_is_not_the_act_of_a_friend)





***“Peace is not only the absence of war, but it is the absence of dire poverty and hunger. Peace is freedom from sickness and disease. It is employment and health. Peace is based on a deep sense of human equality and basic justice. Peace is when we have no fear to assemble, to worship, to work, to speak and publish the truth, even to the powerful. Peace is hope for our future and the future of all God's children and all God's world. Peace is salaam, well-being for all, equality and respect for human rights. Peace is when everybody feels at home and is accepted, without barriers based on age, class, sex, race, religion, or nationality. Peace is that fragile harmony that carries with it the experience of struggle, the endurance of suffering, and the strength of love.”***

Jean Zaru

## ***Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks***



A woman mourns as she carries the shrouded body of a child killed following overnight Israeli strikes on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on May 6, 2024, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement. (Photo: -/AFP via Getty Images)

### **How Many Dead Palestinian Children Are Enough?**

***Gary Smith, Common Dreams, 20 May 2025***

***This is ethnic cleansing, pure and simple. The goal is to eliminate Palestinians from both Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Jerusalem.***

How many dead children is it going to take before Israel and its Zionist supporters are satisfied? What is the number that needs to be met before governments in the West intervene? When will the United States and other countries stop selling weapons and funding the genocide of children? This is a serious question.

Because after 19 months of genocide, Israel has reportedly killed 17,400 children. Many more are buried under rubble and presumed dead, but not included in this running total of children killed.

Clearly, 17,400 is not enough dead children, since Israel continues to kill one child in Gaza every 45 minutes, an average of 30 children killed every day.

***As a Jew, I am well aware that Israel has been systematically killing children for 77 years. This is not new. What is new is the world is watching children blown to literal pieces.***

As of March 2, Israel has cut off all aid to Gaza. Israel has blocked food, water, and medicine from reaching the 2.3 million people in Gaza. “A million children in Gaza depend on humanitarian aid. Their lives are hanging in the balance,” said Juliette Touma, director of communications for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

The United Nations’ emergency relief coordinator said the halting of humanitarian aid amounts to “cruel collective punishment.”

The human beings under siege in Gaza are not starving; they are being deliberately starved. There is a very clear distinction between the two.

But apparently, it’s still not enough dead children. Israel broke the latest

cease-fire agreement on March 18. The Gaza Health Ministry says 2,326 people, including 732 children, have been killed since that day when Israel shattered the truce. The overall death toll since the war broke out is at 52,418.

***Again, how many dead children are enough?***

**Read full article:**

[https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/dead-palestinian-children?fbclid=IwY2xjawKbulZleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFvU0RORTThYTG9COGdxRXpsAR67vFg87yV0mXmGDCT-Wkj2T3Re9xaCdkFdeApy6tSYtGuTNNrrJaCR0ux-GA\\_aem\\_PJ6VdCxaohcE-hrkcuxXBQ](https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/dead-palestinian-children?fbclid=IwY2xjawKbulZleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFvU0RORTThYTG9COGdxRXpsAR67vFg87yV0mXmGDCT-Wkj2T3Re9xaCdkFdeApy6tSYtGuTNNrrJaCR0ux-GA_aem_PJ6VdCxaohcE-hrkcuxXBQ)



Displaced Palestinians line up and wait to fill their containers with water in Gaza City on 6 May 2025 (World Food Programme)

## **How should Australia respond to the starvation of Gaza?**

***Annabel Dulhunty, DEVPOLICY BLOG, 15 May 2025***

It has now been more than two months since Israel began to block the entry of food and medicine to Gaza. According to the World Food Programme, about 1.94 million people across the Gaza Strip experienced high levels of acute food insecurity between 1 April and 10 May 2025, including nearly 244,000 people facing catastrophic food insecurity. The Gaza Media Office claims 290,000 children may now be on the “brink of death”. Twenty United Nations Human Rights council experts last week called for measures to end the “annihilation” of Palestinians in Gaza and said that the world had to make a “stark decision” —

to “remain passive and witness the slaughter of innocents or take part in crafting a just resolution”. Around 3,000 trucks carrying aid from UNRWA are currently stuck waiting for entry to Gaza.

Starvation is a particularly cruel and inhumane way to die. Working in humanitarian aid and development for over fifteen years, I have often felt devastated at how the world can turn a blind eye to the suffering of people in places wracked by famine or war, deemed too “far away” to care about.

Yet what is most galling about the starvation of Gaza is the West’s complicity. It is not merely a case of ignoring a terrible crime against humanity, but also of aiding and abetting it. In the past 19 months, the United States government has provided US\$17.9 billion to Israeli military operations. It is reported that since September last year, the United Kingdom has sent 8,630 separate munitions to Israel, despite the announced suspension of arms export licenses. Amnesty International has also accused Australia of exporting armaments to Israel via exports to the United States which are then sent to Israel. This indirect approach has enabled the Albanese government to claim it has not exported arms to Israel. However, the Australian government and its Western allies are coming under pressure from civil society organisations to stop all arms exports to Israel, direct and indirect, including exports of Australian-made weapons components being used in the manufacture of F-35 fighter jets used against Gaza.

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As it stands, the government of Israel has proposed letting aid into Gaza on its own terms, to hubs controlled by the military. Yet this plan appears to use humanitarian aid as “bait” — with supplies for only one-tenth of the population aimed at luring Gazans to collection points. Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs calls it a “deliberate attempt to weaponize the aid”. According to UNICEF spokesperson James Elder, this plan “contravenes basic humanitarian principles” and would create an “impossible choice between displacement and death”.

While we may seem removed from the situation in Gaza, Australia can do much more to try to end this human suffering. For example, Australia can grant more visas to Palestinian refugees — Australia has so far rejected over 7000 applications. It can revoke permits to export to the United States for arms produced by Electro Optic Systems, Lockheed Martin and Thales Australia, contingent upon legally binding guarantees that these commodities will not be sent to Israel. Instead of using tepid language to describe Israel’s actions, Australia can also take a much stronger stance in condemnation of the genocide, and apply targeted sanctions. It can also join 148 countries, including Norway, Ireland and Spain, in recognising Palestine as a state. Australia’s



unequivocal condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine provides an important template for strong Australian condemnation of violations of International Humanitarian Law.

***If Australia does not act now, it will remain complicit in the mass starvation of hundreds of thousands of children. Surely, that is something worth speaking out and acting on.***

**Read full article:**

[https://devpolicy.org/how-should-australia-respond-to-the-starvation-of-gaza-20250515/?fbclid=IwY2xjawKaE5lleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBicmlkETFFNkJ4QzBEbzdpVUpBMW56AR5BRka6txQ7FZMDuMMPICuCtDOgAKTTxHcW9B2nKbfntfNberjL6MYkKpIBng\\_aem\\_1c4U6f4sOyY3jVmOQ96liQ](https://devpolicy.org/how-should-australia-respond-to-the-starvation-of-gaza-20250515/?fbclid=IwY2xjawKaE5lleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBicmlkETFFNkJ4QzBEbzdpVUpBMW56AR5BRka6txQ7FZMDuMMPICuCtDOgAKTTxHcW9B2nKbfntfNberjL6MYkKpIBng_aem_1c4U6f4sOyY3jVmOQ96liQ)



## **A defining moment for the future of Palestine**

***Henry Reynolds, Pearls and Irritations, 27 May 2024***

***A United Nations conference in New York between 17 and 20 June will be a defining moment for the future of Palestinian statehood and the endlessly debated, but never resolved, policy known as the two-state solution.***

With Israel openly declaring that it will now take full possession of Gaza, the timing could not be more apposite. It will confront Australia with an inescapable decision. Will it finally vote in favour of Palestinian statehood and bring to an end the endless equivocation or will it announce to the assembled nations that it has never really believed in the two-state solution and that fear of being accused of antisemitism has carried the day?

The Murdoch press has already joined the fray with two designated security experts writing in *The Australian* (22 May) and arguing that support for

Palestinian statehood will be tantamount to standing in line with the terrorists. We can be sure that this is but the opening salvo in a long campaign. But we can also be confident that the arguments will proceed without the context necessary for the Australian public to understand why global opinion is now ready to favour the Palestinian cause.

To begin with, we must go back to the decision of the International Court of Justice in July last year about Israel's ongoing occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel captured all three territories in 1967 by military force. That did not allow legal annexation then or now. Passage of time does not alter the legal situation. Israel is therefore required to bring about an end to the unlawful occupation as rapidly as possible. It should evacuate all existing Jewish settlements and immediately cease all new settlements. It should pay reparations to the Palestinian community for all damage and exploitation of resources since 1967.

The assertion of Palestinian rights was equally emphatic. They were entitled to self-determination "a right that constituted a peremptory norm of international law in such a situation of foreign occupation". Israel has the obligation not to impede the advance towards self-determination "including its right to an independent and sovereign state over the entirety of the occupied territories". Turning to general principles the Court reaffirmed:

"The need for universal adherence to and implementation of the rule of law... and its solemn commitment to an international order based on the rule of law and international law, which together is essential for peaceful co-existence and co-operation among states."

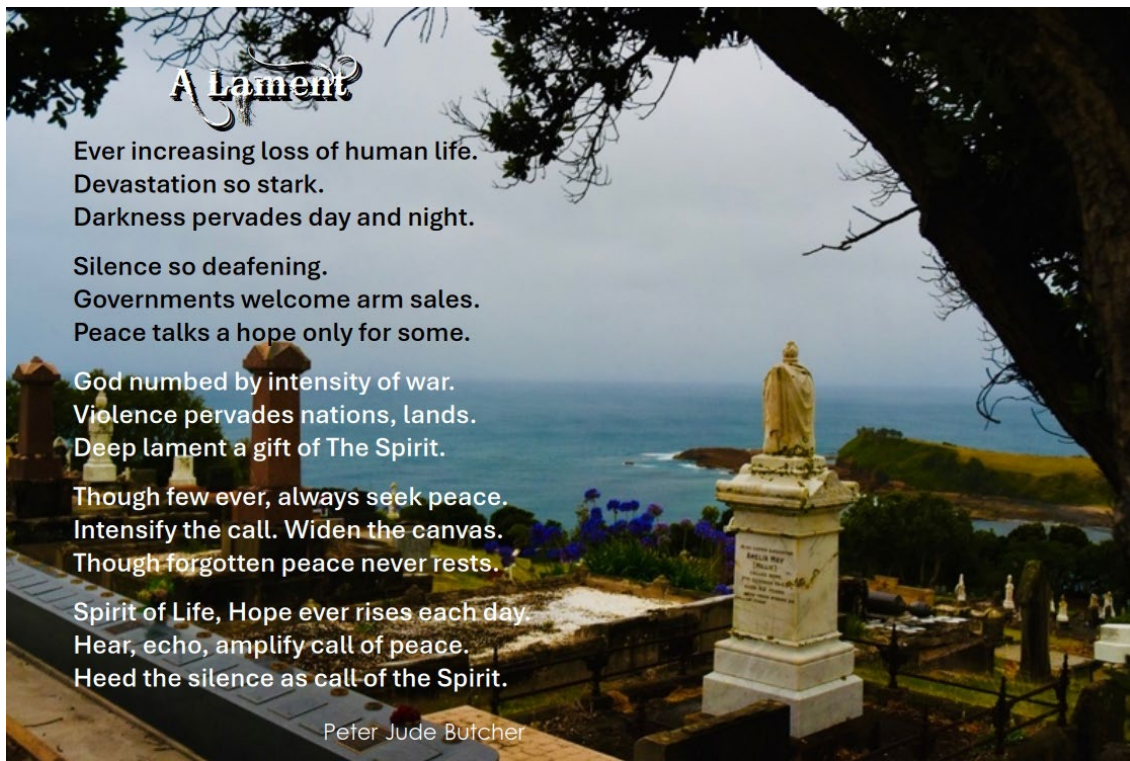
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What is at stake here is Australia's standing in the world. The easy, everyday tolerance of Israel's utter contempt for international law is on open display, as is our own high-end hypocrisy. Will anyone ever again take seriously Australia's well-known habit of chiding other countries about their record on human rights and our endless advocacy of what we call the rules-based international order?

**Read full article:**

<https://johnmenadue.com/post/2025/05/a-defining-moment-for-the-future-of-palestine/?>





Students' bags are kept in front of a school building damaged in a bombardment carried out by Myanmar's military at the Ohe Htein Twin village in Tabayin township, Sagaing Region, on May 12. (Photo: AFP)

## **Myanmar junta airstrike kills 22 at school**

**AFP Depeyin, UCA News, 13 May 2025**

### ***Global alarm over strike at a village school near epicenter of March 28 quake despite humanitarian ceasefire***

A Myanmar junta airstrike hit a school on May 12, killing 22 people, including 20 children, witnesses said, despite a purported humanitarian ceasefire called to help the Southeast Asian nation recover from a devastating earthquake.

The strike hit a school in the village of Oe Htein Kwin -- around 100 kilometres (65 miles) northwest of the epicentre of the March 28 quake -- at about 10:00 am (0330 GMT), locals said.

UN chief Antonio Guterres is "deeply alarmed" by reports of the strike, his spokesman told reporters in New York, adding that "schools must remain areas in which children have a safe place to learn and not be bombed."

The green school building was a shattered husk on May 12 afternoon, its metal roof crumpled with gaping holes blasted through its brickwork walls.

Over a dozen abandoned book bags were piled before a pole flying the Myanmar flag outside, as parents chiselled small graves out of the hard earth to bury the shrouded bodies of their children.

"For now 22 people in total -- 20 children and two teachers -- have been killed," said a 34-year-old teacher at the school, asking to remain anonymous.

"We tried to spread out the children, but the fighter was too fast and dropped its bombs," she added. "I haven't been able to collect all the casualty data as parents are in a rush."

An education official from the area of the village in Sagaing region gave the same toll.

The junta information team said reports of the strike were "fabricated news."

"There was no airstrike on non-military targets," it said in a statement.

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Last week, the UN said that since the earthquake, more than 200 civilians had been killed in at least 243 military attacks, including 171 airstrikes.

In its ceasefire declaration, the military warned it would take "necessary defensive measures" if pressed by its opponents.

Numerous anti-coup and ethnic armed groups have made their own pledges to pause hostilities.

However, during the truce, some residents in eastern Myanmar said they have been displaced as anti-coup forces besieged junta-held towns on a lucrative trade route towards neighboring Thailand.

The March earthquake saw the ground shear up to six metres (20 feet) in places, according to NASA analysis -- levelling apartments, opening yawning holes in roads and collapsing one major bridge.

The relief response is also being hobbled by funding shortfalls after US President Donald Trump slashed Washington's international aid budget.

**Read full article:**

[https://www.ucanews.com/news/myanmar-junta-airstrike-kills-22-at-school/108967?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=UCAN+Evng+Campaign13May2025\\_04&cmid=0e0ee8c9-44cc-454c-9857-142d92144e0d](https://www.ucanews.com/news/myanmar-junta-airstrike-kills-22-at-school/108967?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=UCAN+Evng+Campaign13May2025_04&cmid=0e0ee8c9-44cc-454c-9857-142d92144e0d)



# Refugee Council of Australia

## **Refugee sector writes to congratulate Prime Minister Albanese on reelection**

***Refugee Council of Australia 16 May 2025***

The Refugee Council of Australia has joined with 39 prominent refugee, legal, human rights and faith-based organisations across Australia to congratulate the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, on the return of his Government in the 2025 Federal Election; to jointly affirm the values of fairness, equality and respect he espoused in his election night speech; and to express our commitment in working towards an Australia that is fairer, kinder and more welcoming to all.

13 May 2025

Hon. Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of our 40 organisations, we congratulate you and members of your Government on your re-election and the strong mandate you received from the Australian people.

On election night, you spoke about the importance of our national unity being built on the enduring foundations of fairness, equality and respect for one another. These values deeply resonate with the organisations and communities we represent and support. This is true for all Australians, particularly people from refugee and asylum backgrounds aspiring to build new lives, contribute meaningfully and help shape a stronger nation.

We recognise the progress made on enhancing refugee protection in the previous Parliament, including increasing the annual Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places, granting permanent Resolution of Status visas to 20,170 refugees previously limited to temporary protection, establishing the Administrative Review Tribunal, dedicating additional resources to address the backlog in protection visa applications, and improving

support for people fleeing emergencies in Ukraine and the Middle East.

However, for others who have come to Australia seeking protection, there is still work to be done, including for those failed by the previous Coalition Government's fast track processing regime, people classified as "transitory persons" who remain in limbo, and those who remain detained offshore.

Later this year, Australia will reach a significant milestone when the Government grants the one millionth permanent refugee visa since regular refugee resettlement began in 1947. This extraordinary achievement, made possible through the commitment of successive governments, has reshaped our country. Today, millions of Australians contribute to our nation because they, their parents or grandparents were given the opportunity to shape new lives free from persecution and war.

The new Australian Parliament led by your Government can build on this 80-year legacy and drive positive reforms.

By continuing to be a leader in refugee resettlement, continuing positive reform of Australia's asylum systems, and supporting improvements internationally to how refugees are treated where they first seek protection, Australia can contribute to providing safe alternatives to forcibly displaced people in our region and beyond. Our organisations hope to work with your Government to accomplish the refugee policy goals in Labor's national platform by:

- Strengthening Australia's long-standing commitment to refugee resettlement and expanding complementary migration pathways
- Fairly and practically resolving protracted protection cases and repairing fundamental flaws in the asylum system, including providing a pathway to permanency for those failed by the fast track system and those in the 'transitory group' with no durable solution
- Providing access to a more meaningful safety net for people in need while they undergo the protection assessment process
- Advancing regional cooperation across the Asia-Pacific to enhance access to durable solutions and longer term protection for refugees, with attention to those at heightened risk, including people at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Delivering on Global Refugee Forum pledges on resettlement, community sponsorship, refugee labour mobility, education, mental health, immigration detention, refugee participation, gender, statelessness and international cooperation.

...Additionally, we remain deeply troubled by the continuation of the costly and damaging offshore processing system. As groups working directly with people

subject to this policy, we have seen the damage that offshore processing policy has caused over the past 13 years. Discussion about constructive alternatives is long overdue, and we look forward to engaging with your Government on this issue.

Our organisations are committed to working with your Government to help achieve these shared goals, drawing on decades of expertise, lived experience, community partnerships and civic participation.

Together, we can fulfil our shared vision in upholding Australia's humanitarian principles and strengthening our democratic resilience and multicultural society — one to which refugees and migrants have contributed significantly.

Yours sincerely

**Link to full letter with signatories:**

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2505-Joint-sector-letter-to-PM-Albanese-1.pdf>



**PACIFIC ISLANDS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**



## ***April 2025 Kiribati Visit***

In late 2024, six Pacific Island Fellows from Kiribati and Tuvalu were welcomed to Sydney by the Edmund Rice Centre as part of the Pacific Islands Fellowship Program, an initiative funded through the Australia Awards by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This unique opportunity served to strengthen and renew our partnerships with Pacific based organisations KiriCAN and TuCAN, who each nominated three fellows from their local communities to participate and represent. Throughout their time in Australia, the fellows participated in intensive capacity-building workshops, meaningful talanoa with diaspora communities, and advocacy training that culminated in direct engagement with Australian politicians at Parliament House. There, they powerfully shared firsthand accounts highlighting the urgent need for climate justice, stories of drinking brackish water, the vulnerability of persons with disabilities during climate disasters, and the profound loss of land, language, and cultural identity due to rising sea levels. Following the completion of the Australia-based program in December 2024, each fellow was tasked with leading a community workshop back home to apply and showcase their learning.

In April 2025, Rose Parker, Program, Partnerships and Community Engagement Officer, travelled to Kiribati to support Miriam and Robert in delivering their in-country activities.

### **Impact Report: Kiribati Fellowship Visit – April 2025**

#### ***Overview***

In early April 2025, I travelled to Kiribati to complete the final in-country component of the DFAT-sponsored Pacific Fellowship program. This visit supported two fellows: Miriam Moriati, President of the Kiribati Rotaract Youth Club, and Robert Karoro, Coordinator of the Kiribati Climate Action Network (KiriCAN). Also joining the trip were Teki and Marie from St James College (Edmund Rice School in Brisbane), who supported educational and cultural engagement throughout the visit.

#### ***Key Activities & Outcomes***

##### ***1. Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) Workshop***

Miriam and Robert co-facilitated an Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) workshop, a framework used to assess the capabilities of community organisations and identify areas for improvement. The workshop was inspired by training and support provided through Oxfam Pacific and adapted for the Kiribati context.



The session enhanced civil society capacity-building and supported strategic planning for grassroots action—especially critical given the recent decline in international aid. It was a timely and empowering experience for all participants.

## ***2. Mangrove Planting Initiative***

Led by the Rotaract Youth Club, a mangrove planting activity at Bonriki Causeway resulted in the planting of 30 mangroves. This symbolic and practical initiative demonstrated youth leadership in environmental restoration and resilience-building.

Donated Supplies:

- Australian Museum – Mangrove planting equipment
- Uniting Church Theological College & Matavai Pacific Cultural Arts Centre – Stationery for youth workshops

“It was inspiring to see youth—many from low-income families—finding purpose and community through environmental action

## ***3. Financial Support for KiriCAN***

A \$500 donation was provided to KiriCAN to support their ongoing environmental and youth education programs, including their hydroponic farming and climate advocacy work.

## ***4. Youth Education & Food Security***

We visited KiriCAN's hydroponic farm, which grows lettuce and cabbage as part of its food security response. Youth from the Rotaract Youth Club are being trained in hydroponics, gaining tools to teach and implement sustainable agriculture in their own communities.

## ***5. Community & Cultural Exchange***

- Teki and Marie led a Samoan sasa dance workshop, which was a vibrant and meaningful cultural exchange activity.
- We visited St Louis High School, Good Samaritan College, and Sacred Heart College, distributing educational resources from St James College Brisbane and laying the groundwork for future cultural exchange programs.

## ***6. Indigenous Knowledge Learning – Tarawa Ieta Visit***

Our day trip to Tarawa Ieta (North Tarawa) provided a first-hand encounter with traditional i-Kiribati living. Powered by solar energy with minimal infrastructure, the island represents resilience and simplicity in the face of increasing climate disruptions. This immersion highlighted the urgent need to preserve Indigenous knowledge systems under threat from displacement and rising sea levels.

## ***Reflections & Recommendations***

This experience demonstrated:

- The impact of youth-led environmental action

- The value of grassroots capacity-building tools like OCAT
- The importance of cultural solidarity and exchange across the Pacific
- The value of continuous partnership between ERC and KiriCAN
- The importance of bridging connections e.g visiting Kiribati with an Edmund Rice School to create links

Recommendations:

- Continue resourcing youth organisations and their climate initiatives
- Invest in hydroponics and food sovereignty education
- Promote school-to-school partnerships and cultural immersion programs
- Further development in advocacy training for youth



‘One of the first tests for the new government will be setting a 2035 emissions reduction target, a line in the sand that will guide Australia’s climate action for the next decade.’ Photograph: Bilanol/Shutterstock

**Australia’s climate targets are only as good as the action behind them. We need to aim higher**

***Amanda McKenzie, The Guardian, 20 May 2025***

***How fast we cut climate pollution will define how safe or scary the world becomes as our children grow up***

At its core, the most fundamental duty of any government is to safeguard the security and wellbeing of its people. The climate crisis is hitting Australians hard.

Right now, farmers in South Australia and Victoria are battling drought, while Queensland farmers pick up the pieces after heartbreaking floods. Globally, 2024 was the hottest year on record and the first time average temperatures

surged 1.5C above preindustrial levels. We are living through longer, deadlier heatwaves, devastating bushfires, more frequent and intense floods, and rising sea levels that threaten coastal communities.

This year, the economic impacts of the climate crisis have been severe as well, with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred adding a \$1.2bn cost to the federal budget.

Scientists have warned us for decades that slashing climate pollution is critical to protecting Australians. The last federal parliament started to turn around Australia's highly polluting economy. We now have about 40% of the electricity in our main grid coming from renewables backed by storage, a vehicle efficiency scheme to cut transport pollution, and we have begun regulating big polluters.

Despite the fossil fuel lobby bankrolling third-party groups to run campaigns against climate solutions, Australians have resoundingly endorsed Labor's energy and climate policies and given them a historic mandate to go further.

.....  
Australia's 2035 emissions reduction target must be a line of defence against the escalating dangers of climate change. The Australian people are expecting meaningful action on climate change, having just given a massive majority to a Labor government that promised to take the crisis seriously.

The choices around how fast we cut climate pollution will define how safe or scary the world becomes as our children grow up. Doing what is necessary is hard, but failing now could very likely undermine other work of this government on setting out its legacy – and will make life extremely difficult for everyone that comes after us.

**Read full article:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/20/australias-climate-targets-are-only-as-good-as-the-action-behind-them-we-need-to-aim-higher?>



### Jamberoo Abbey Facebook Post 24 May 2025

*"Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope." Laudato Si' 244*

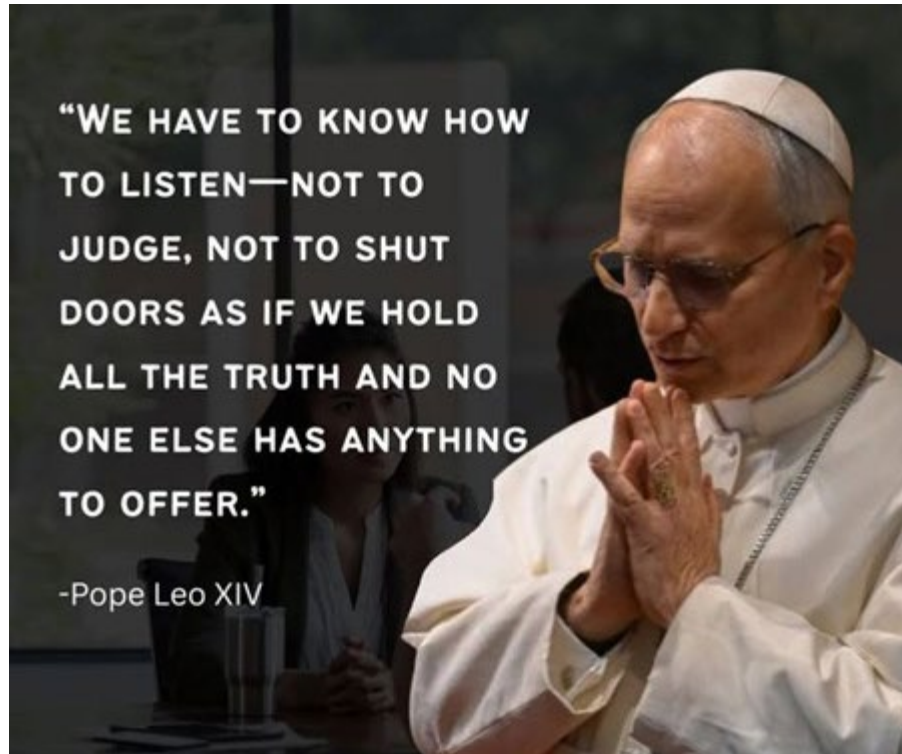
*Today, we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the encyclical Laudato Si', the text with which Pope Francis called humanity to care for the common home, interweaving ecology, social justice and spirituality. The theme for 2025 is "Raising Hope" which links with the 2025 Jubilee Year theme, "Pilgrims of Hope".*

*We have only to look at the tragic weather events in our country at the moment - floods in NSW and severe drought in Victoria and South Australia - to remind us of the effects of climate change and the urgent cry from our Mother Earth to take more radical action before it's too late. As the image below states, "everything is connected" and with this connection comes a task: to treasure, plant, care, nurture, heal, save. We commit to these actions for our planet, but this week, we also wrap them*

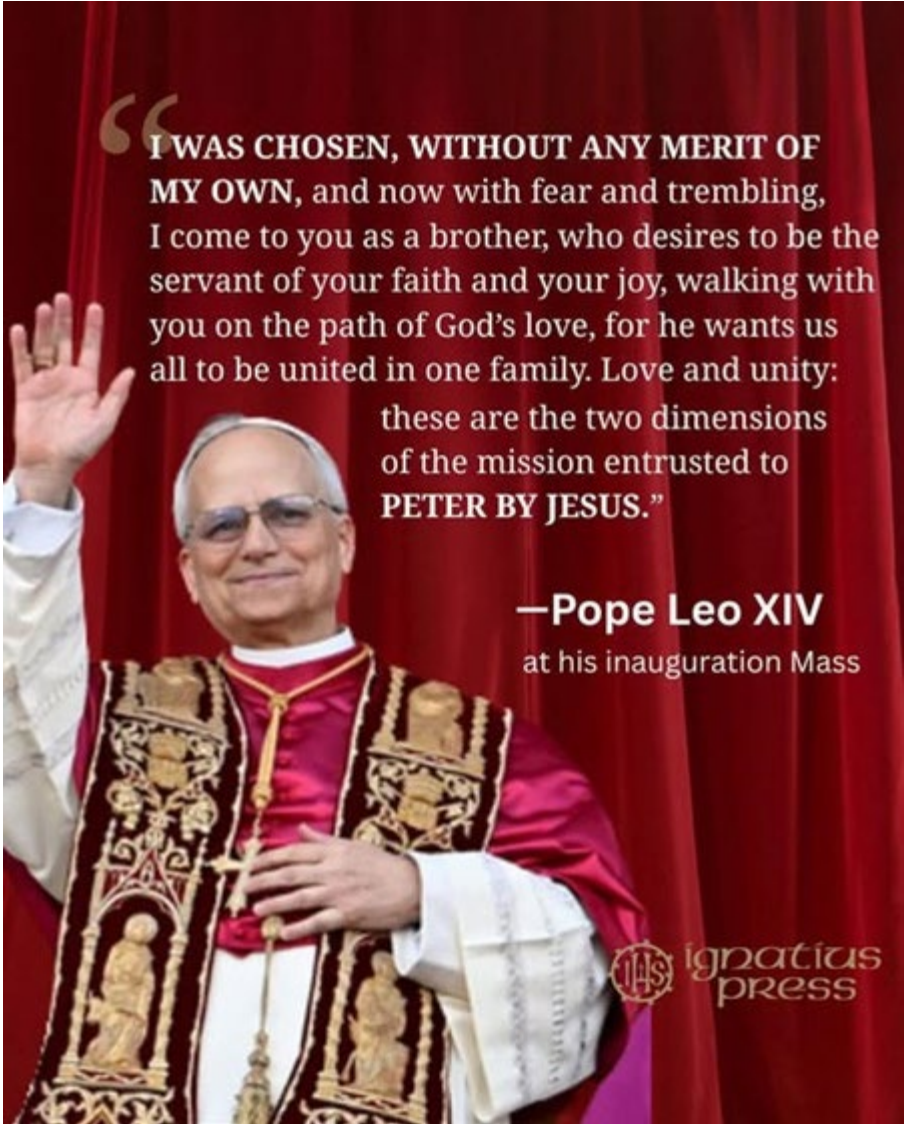
***round our sisters, brothers and all animals and wildlife affected by floods and drought. In the midst of so much despair, we hold the hope for them and raise them up through our thoughts, prayers and action.***

Laudato Si'...Praised Be!

## **REFLECTIONS**





A photograph of Pope Leo XIV, an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a red cassock and a white and gold embroidered stole. He is waving his right hand and holding a golden cross in his left hand. The background is a red curtain.

“**I WAS CHOSEN, WITHOUT ANY MERIT OF MY OWN,** and now with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God’s love, for he wants us all to be united in one family. Love and unity: these are the two dimensions of the mission entrusted to **PETER BY JESUS.**”

**—Pope Leo XIV**  
at his inauguration Mass

 **ignatius  
press**

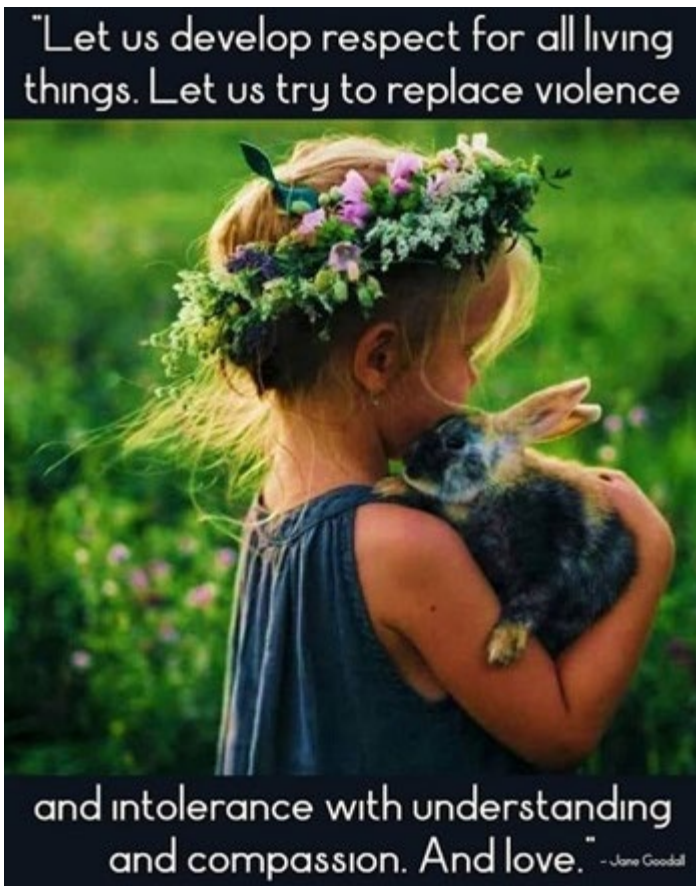




### **The Boy and the Glass Wall**

Beneath the olive's trembling shade,  
a barefoot child in silence played.  
His home was dust, his roof the sky,  
his lullaby - the drones that cry.  
He learned too young the weight of stone,  
the taste of fear when left alone.  
He drew with chalk on crumbled bricks,  
a world beyond what can't be fixed.  
He dreamt of oceans, vast and deep,  
where jellyfish in silence sleep.

A glass wall stood - the world's divide,  
where watchers watched, then turned aside.  
His voice was wrapped in censored thread,  
each word he spoke - a thing to dread.  
For truth, they said, could be a flame,  
and he, too small to bear the blame.  
The stars above him blinked and dimmed,  
the world spoke not, though truth was rimmed  
in ash and blood and mother's cries -  
a silence stitched with global lies.  
But still he stood, with his back held straight,  
a child defying written fate.  
He carved a poem in the dust  
that even time would learn to trust:  
"They cut our trees and break our bread,  
they write our stories when we're dead.  
But I am a seed, and wind, and stone -  
and I will grow when I'm alone."  
And in the night, a jasmine bloomed,  
where tanks once came and hope was doomed.  
A whisper rose, then formed a stream -  
a thousand hearts began to dream.  
The boy still plays beneath the tree,  
his silence loud, his spirit free.  
For in his hands - though torn and small,  
he holds the truth that breaks the wall.



### **Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations**

***“Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy’s point of view, to hear his\* questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.”*** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

***“Open the eyes to see the suffering of the others, open the heart to feel for them, and then finally open the mind to do right by everyone.”***

Brian Haw

***“If we look at societies that set a high value on nonaggression and noncompetitiveness, and therefore handle conflicts by nonviolent means, we can see how child rearing patterns produce nurturing adult behaviors.”*** Elise Boulding, "Peace Culture: The Problem of Managing Human Difference"

**“Scripture tells us to envision  
that everyone shall sit under their own**

vine and fig tree  
and no one shall make them afraid.  
If we're to live up to our own time  
Then victory won't lie in the blade  
But in the all the bridges we've made."

Amanda Gorman, The Hill We Climb

***"Hope is the basis for taking responsibility; for claiming our capacity to create, to make a genuinely new thing. It is also the springboard for trying to act justly; and for accepting absolutely our incorporation into each other. It is not simply that we share with each other a common humanity, but that individually we have no humanity without each other."***

Sara Maitland, A Big Enough God

***"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."*** [Mohandas Gandhi](#)

***"To allocate a large part of spending to weapons means taking it away from something else, which means continuing to take it away from those who lack necessities. Continuing to spend on weapons sullies the soul, sullies the heart, sullies humanity."***

Pope Francis, *London Catholic Worker*, "Editorial Statement on UK Rearmament,"  
*Lent/Easter 2025, issue 78*



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the  
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART  
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.