

PRESS RELEASE

19 October 2023

A JOINT CALL TO END THE WAR AND AN INVITATION TO THE PREMIER TO JOIN PALESTINE ACTION GROUP

The humanitarian crisis in Palestine is escalating – with civilians in Gaza still being denied food, medical attention and supplies, water and fuel by the State of Israel. There is no safe place to flee.

The organisers, Palestine Action Group and Tzedek member, Jews Against Occupation, a Jewish collective – are protesting in one voice to stop the war and to stand in solidarity with those impacted by the humanitarian crisis. We stand to give the voiceless a voice. We are supported by unions, faith leaders, lawyers, civil rights organisations and everyday Australians who recognise that, in the darkest days of war, we have a collective responsibility to protect humanity.

This responsibility transcends creed, nationality or where you call home.

We do not stand for racism, Antisemitism, or Islamophobia. There is no place in our movement or at our protests for abhorrent and criminal conduct.

On Wednesday 16 October 2023, we woke to a new horror. As the bombings intensified in Gaza, civilians fled to the Al-Ahli Anglican Hospital in the hope that they would be safe. A hospital where doctors and nurses tried their best to treat the injured, where women were delivering babies, and where the sick remained, unable to flee even if safe passage was available.

We woke to the horror that the hospital had been bombed. Five hundred people died, including women, children, and babies. It is clear that Israel's brutal revenge attacks on civilians in Gaza is responsible for this outrage.

They were not soldiers. They were not terrorists. They held no weapons. They were normal people with dreams and aspirations – all five hundred of them.

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 50,000 pregnant women are currently trapped in Gaza as they are denied food, water, fuel and medical attention. Around 160 women are due to give birth every day in Gaza under these conditions.

Over one million Palestinian people are now displaced. That is double the population of Canberra crowded into a space of less than half of Canberra.

The United Nations, of which Australia is a founding member, has warned us that what is unfolding creates a risk of ethnic cleansing.

Our Deputy Prime Minister, a day before our last protest, said the collective punishment of innocent civilians was “within the rules of war”.

It is not.

The day after the protest, Federal Parliament sat.

Not a single member of the Government condemned the mass atrocities and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

The Premier of New South Wales recently lamented that *“it’s too much to expect the community to pull together right at this moment, we can’t let international events pull us apart...”*.

We protest because we reject this divisiveness. We protest to demonstrate we can come together as Australians. We protest to send a unified message to our political leadership – we expect you to pull together, just like we have.

Do not use this humanitarian crisis to sow seeds of division or to score political points.

Let that not be your legacy – which far outlasts any political term.

The Premier and all members of the State Parliament are invited to join our movement.

On Sunday 15 October 2023, we held a protest in Hyde Park in collaboration with New South Wales Police. Over 6,000 people attended. After the protest, NSW Police thanked the organisers and protestors for their behaviour.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has escalated since our protest on Sunday.

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has said there are now not enough body bags for the dead in Gaza.

Since the protest last Sunday, we have again been working collaboratively with police to achieve another safe and successful protest set for this Saturday 21 October 2023 in Sydney.

We have agreed with the NSW Police that our protest will start with a gathering at Sydney Town Hall at 1:00 pm and we have agreed with the police on the route for our march from Town Hall to Belmore Park – a well-known route for street

marches. A route that has been walked by Australians who have marched for peace in the Vietnam War and in the Iraq War.

The NSW Police have been working cooperatively and collaboratively with us to ensure a successful event on Saturday and we want this to continue.



Rally co-organiser Fabad Ali shakes hands with Superintendent Martin Fileman following the conclusion of the successful Palestine rally last Sunday.

The speakers at Town Hall will include Wiradjuri & Badu Island woman Lynda-June Coe, Gazan Palestinian Ahmed Abadla, Michelle Berkon from Jews Against the Occupation, Palestinian organiser and legal student Amal Naser, as well as politicians and representatives from the trade union movement.

In holding this march, we are exercising `a right that is afforded to all Australians – regardless of political persuasions, ethnicity or religion.

A right that is protected in our Constitution.

A right that cannot be diminished by the political will of the day.

A right that we, and our supporters, are ready to defend in Court if we need to. But we hope there is no need to go to Court and that we can simply continue to work with the police for a safe and peaceful event.

We call on all people of conscience to stand with us and demand an end to the war, an immediate ceasefire, and an end to the disastrous occupation and blockade of Palestinian land – without which, there can be no just peace.

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19 October 2023

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