



## Terrorism and Revenge can never be a foundation for a secure peace for Israelis and Palestinians

November 2023

*We must state the obvious: calling on Israel to hold back from revenge does not, in any way, mitigate the horror of Hamas's actions. Criticising both Hamas and Israel does not form a symmetry or provide a comparison. This is not a zero-sum game: the amount of pain and trauma in the world is not finite.*

*Suffering does not justify suffering, and one injustice does not justify another, and one crime does not warrant another. Revenge cannot be a plan of action for a state. We can – and must – demand other solutions: ones that are based not on more death, destruction and loss but on a fundamental acknowledgement that all human beings are equal and deserve to live. Every single one.*

Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem, 15 October 2023

The war that is currently taking place in Gaza is not a war between Israelis and Palestinians. Instead, it is a conflict between those on both sides who believe a future can be built on mass murder and bloodshed and those who believe that meaningful peace can only be achieved through negotiation and the renouncing of violence.

*I explained in as measured a tone as I could muster that when Palestinians felt that preventing terrorism would lead to the end of our occupation and the establishment of their own state, they cooperated with us. What most Palestinians sought, more than anything, wasn't our blood – they just wanted to trust that the Israeli government would end the occupation and allow them to be free. And we've given them little reason to trust us. What I was thinking but couldn't yet bring myself to say publicly was that our pursuit of peace was a sham. We were still caught in the Zionism of my parent's generation that saw the entire Land of Israel as our birthright. Since we refused to admit that Palestinians have rights and roots in Judea and Samaria, too, we were always looking for ways to renege on our promises. What we wanted was security, and if we could get it without handing over any more of the Land of Israel, we'd do it.*

*Our instinctive resort to disproportionate force, I barrellled on, has created the opposite of what we want to achieve. We jeopardise our own security each time, in the name of security, our soldiers gun down Palestinian stone-throwers, and our actions fuel calls for revenge.*

Quote from Admiral Ami Ayalon from *Friendly Fire. How Israel became its own worst enemy*, 2020, page 185. Retired Admiral Ayalon is a former commander of the Israeli navy, former director of the Israeli Shin Bet security agency, former cabinet minister, member of the Israeli Parliament and recipient of the Medal of Valor, Israel's highest military decoration.

### Position of the Middle East Churches on the Israel – Gaza War

On 18 October 2023, the Middle East Council of Churches issued a very strongly worded statement condemning the Israeli attacks on Gaza:

*What is happening on the land of Gaza in terms of scorched earth practices and the burning of those on it has deviated from all logic, divine and human law, as even wars have controls defined by international treaties and conventions.*

*Attacking defenceless civilians, including the sick and those with special needs, as well as children, women and the elderly, destroying infrastructure and the medical system, killing medical staff and journalists, and cutting off water, supplies and medicines from a community consisting of two and a half million people, can only be described as a crime against humanity.*



*The Middle East Council of Churches, whose membership includes all the churches of the region and whose development institutions are spread throughout the entire territory of Palestine and the map of Palestinian displacement, calls on the international community, including international institutions concerned with human rights, childhood and civilian protection, and calls on all honourable people in the world, to take the appropriate position and to proceed with the appropriate steps immediately, the first of which is stopping the aggression against Gaza, lifting the siege and opening the crossings. We raise prayers for the comfort of the souls of those who died, for the healing of the wounded and sick, and for peace to prevail in the world.*

### **Australian Government position on the Israel – Gaza War**

Unlike previous Australian Governments, the current Commonwealth Government has adopted a more nuanced position, seeking to support a curbing of the war and a reduction in the suffering of people on both sides. Previous Australian Governments have tended to support the Israeli Government of the day regardless of its actions.

While condemning the brutal terrorist attack of Hamas on 7 October, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Penny Wong, expressed concern for the loss of life in Gaza and called for the protection of civilian lives by the Israeli forces. She called on the Israeli Government to uphold the laws of war, International Humanitarian Law, which requires that killing civilians must be kept to a minimum and proportionate to the military objective being pursued. Minister Wong acknowledged that civilians “on both sides have been murdered.”

Minister Wong has also publicly expressed concern that the civilian population in Gaza had “nowhere near enough” access to humanitarian necessities. She called for “humanitarian pauses on hostilities, so food, water, medicine and other essential assistance can reach people in desperate need, and so civilians can get to safety.”

While pledging support for Israel, Prime Minister Albanese has also declared himself a “strong advocate of justice for Palestinians” and that he “supports justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike.”

### **What You Can Do**

Write polite and respectful letters to:

**Senator The Hon. Penny Wong**

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**

Prime Minister  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep sorrow at the tragedy of the war between Israel and Hamas that has claimed thousands of lives.
- Thank the Australian Government for its approach to trying to curb the extent of the killing and its support for upholding human rights.
- Urge that the Australian Government do all it can to see an end to the killing and to support the protection of non-combatants on both sides of the war. The Australian Government should seek to align itself with people who are seeking a just and lasting peace.