

Asking the Australian Government to take further measures for peace in Palestine and Israel

June 2025

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

Matthew 5:7-9

As President of the Uniting Church in Australia, I am compelled to speak with moral clarity, compassion, and a heart broken open by the suffering we are witnessing. We cannot remain silent while bodies are broken beneath bombs, children starve, and our Palestinian siblings in Christ fear for their very existence. If we do not speak, even the stones will cry out.

Uniting Church in Australia President, Rev Charissa Suli, 16 May 2025

In the Middle East, past experience has led both sides of this intractable conflict to feel incredibly pessimistic about the intentions of the other. It seems that all the solutions ever implemented are always short-term, to stop or respond to the violence of today, rather than long-term solutions that could prevent the violence of tomorrow.

Ittay Flescher, *The Holy and the Broken*, (2025), p. 126. Ittay is Education Director at Kids4Peace Jerusalem, an interfaith youth movement for Israelis and Palestinians.

The temporary truce between the Netanyahu Government and Hamas has broken down, and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have been carrying out acts of mass murder against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. These acts are mainly being carried out by the denial of food and other essential supplies and through the deliberate use of excessive force against suspected Hamas targets.

In April 2025, Israeli Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, stated on radio that the aim of the Netanyahu Government was taking complete control of Gaza and relocating all the surviving Palestinians out of Gaza to an unspecified location.

The leadership of Hamas continues to cling to power in Gaza, regardless of the cost in the lives of Palestinian civilians. There is never any suggestion that they would surrender themselves to end the current war and prevent the further deaths of thousands of civilians.

We again encourage you to write to our government urging that they support Palestinians and Israelis who are seeking a lasting peace through non-violent means.

Actions towards Peace

There are actions by Palestinians and Israelis who are seeking a lasting peace through non-violent means that rarely gain media attention. For example, on 8 and 9 May 2025, over 5,000 Palestinians and Israelis gathered in Jerusalem for the People's Peace Summit. The It's Time coalition of dozens of Palestinian and Israeli peace groups organised the Summit. The speakers at the conference were united in their calls for an immediate ceasefire, the return of all hostages, an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the creation of a shared political future.

Soldiers for the Hostages report that 300 Israeli soldiers have joined their ranks and are refusing to participate in the war in Gaza. One soldier has already been imprisoned for his stand. Another faces a court-martial. A third has been threatened with legal action for writing an opinion piece against the war. They are gaining publicity in Israel, making them targets for repressive action by the Netanyahu Government.

War Crimes in Gaza

Following the horrific act of mass murder carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, which resulted in the estimated deaths of over 1,100 Israelis and foreigners, the wounding of over 5,400 and the abduction of over 200, the Israeli Government launched an attack on Gaza with the stated aim of destroying Hamas.

The Israeli attack on Gaza has seen the massive use of force that has left the Palestinian civilian population devastated. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed by the Israeli military from shootings, shelling and bombing. Many more have been injured. Over 90% of Palestinians in Gaza have been made homeless by the Israeli military action.

In our February 2025 action, we highlighted Brigadier General Yehuda Vach, commander of the Israeli 252nd Division. Officers and soldiers under his command have alleged in the Israeli press that he created an environment that made it acceptable for soldiers under his command to murder unarmed Palestinian civilians. He also allegedly ordered his troops to harass aid convoys bringing essential supplies to Palestinian civilians, telling his officers that all Palestinians are terrorists. He allegedly set a goal for his division to drive 250,000 Palestinians from their homes.

Soldiers under his command carried out the massacre of 15 Palestinian paramedics and rescue workers in Gaza on 23 March 2025. All of those murdered were unarmed. Video footage obtained by the *New York Times* showed the ambulances and fire truck the victims were travelling in were clearly marked and had their emergency signal lights on when Israeli troops opened fire on them. The footage contradicted the false statements by the IDF that the vehicles were “advancing suspiciously”. The IDF buried the victims and their vehicles. Munther Abed, a Red Crescent volunteer who survived the massacre, alleged Israeli soldiers had beaten him after being stripped to his underwear.

Over 800 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the conflict in Gaza. Most of these are young men in their late teens or 20s. These deaths justify inflicting destruction on Palestinians in the minds of many Israelis. There is no path to lasting peace through armed combat.

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:

- Thank the Australian Government for its approach to trying to curb the extent of the killing in the Israeli and Hamas conflict and its support for upholding human rights.
- Urge that the Australian Government do all it can to see a lasting end to the killing. The Australian Government should seek to align itself with people who are seeking lasting peace.
- Ask the Australian Government to continue to advocate for the provision of essential supplies to the people of Gaza. Civilian residents of Gaza should not be killed and starved for the actions of the Hamas leadership.
- Ask that the Australian Government fund Palestinian and Israeli organisations that seek a lasting peace that meets the legitimate needs of all people through non-violent means. These groups include Peace Now, Parents Circle – Families Forum, Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre, the Refuser Solidarity Network, Kids4Peace, Roots, Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun.
- Ask that the Australian Government add any Israeli officers and soldiers who have been identified as having ordered or committed war crimes, and have not been brought to justice in a meaningful trial, to the sanctions list. Ask that Brigadier General Yehuda Vach be added to the Australian sanctions list, given the extensive association of soldiers under his command murdering Palestinian civilians, including the recent massacre of 15 paramedics and rescue workers.

Additional Resources

On 16 May 2025, the Uniting Church President, Rev Charissa Suli, issued a public statement on Palestinian suffering and calling for allegations of genocide by the Israeli Defence Forces to be investigated. The statement and a liturgy of lament for Gaza can be accessed from <https://uniting.church/a-cry-too-great-to-ignore-statement-on-palestine-easter-2025/>