



# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

21 September 2025

Faith Community Resource



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission  
Justice & International Mission



The Uniting Church in Australia  
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

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The International Day of Peace (“Peace Day”) is observed worldwide on 21 September each year. Established in 1981 by a unanimous United Nations resolution, Peace Day provides a globally shared date for all humanity to commit to Peace above all differences and contribute to building a Culture of Peace.

The theme for the International Day of Peace for 2025 is “Act Now for a Peaceful World”. In a time of turbulence, tumult, and uncertainty, it is critical for everyone to take concrete action to mobilise for peace. We must speak up against violence, hate, discrimination, and inequality; practice respect; and embrace the diversity of our world.

Let our actions for peace resonate louder than words.

The following resource is for Uniting Church congregations and faith communities that wish to incorporate the International Day of Peace into their services on Sunday 21 September. It includes prayers that could be used and some reflections on peace-building.

Peace in a broader sense requires addressing issues such as inequality, systems that encourage people to exploit and harm others and the legacy of the racist colonial period in human history.

## Uniting Church commitments to being a peace-building church

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The Uniting Church has long committed itself to supporting peace-building and rejecting the idea that the world can be made a better place by killing people.

In 1982, the National Assembly meeting passed a resolution with the following clauses:

### **82.56 It was resolved that the Assembly:**

- (a) (i) *acknowledge that God came in the crucified and risen Christ to make peace; that he calls all Christians to be peacemakers, to save life, to heal and to love their neighbours. The call of Christ to make peace is the norm, and the onus of proof rests on any who resort to military force as a means of solving international disputes;*
- (ii) *note that at this point in history, most governments support military priorities which cause valuable and limited resources to be diverted unproductively towards the*

*purchase of armaments and the maintenance of large military forces; that nuclear weapons are a demonic method of killing and wounding people and poisoning God's creation; and that nuclear war would be catastrophic in terms of both human violence and environmental disaster;*

*(iii) affirm that the Uniting Church is committed to be a peacemaking body, seeking to follow the Lord of the Church by encouraging political authorities to resolve political tensions by peaceful means.*

**(b)** *call on the members of the Uniting Church in Australia to support and engage in peacemaking programs and resist reliance on military solutions to political problems.*

In 2003, the National Assembly meeting passed the Uniting through Peace resolution that included the following:

### **03.19.02 The Assembly resolved:**

*In response to the World Council of Churches' declaration of the Decade to Overcome Violence, to commit:*

*to work together for peace, justice, and reconciliation at all levels – local, regional, and global;*

*to embrace creative approaches to peacebuilding which are consonant with the spirit of the gospel;*

*to interact and collaborate with local communities, secular movements, and people of other living faiths towards cultivating a culture of peace;*

*to empower people who are systemically oppressed by violence, and to act in solidarity with all struggling for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; and*

*to repent together for our complicity in violence, and to engage in theological*

*reflection to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence;*

*to call on all members, councils, agencies, congregations and groups of the Uniting Church to examine their own lives in order to overcome violence and to transform systems and structures of injustice;*

*to commit to work for peace through justice and genuine security, believing that:*

*true justice can only be achieved through means that do not consist of violence nor perpetuate the cycle of violence;*

*true security can only be achieved through non-violent means that seek to build trust and relationships of understanding and acceptance between nations and people.*

## **Peace – Worship Resources**

This resource includes several activities that can be used either as prayer prompts or as encouragement for people of all ages to engage together in discussion and meaning-making around the theme of Peace.

A desire for peace in war-torn parts of our world is close to the hearts of many people of goodwill around the world, including members of the Christian Church. The images of activities in this resource come from a Messy Church session developed in 2022 as part of the Messy Church in Banyule by Rev. Sandy Brodine and Melissa Nemoto, a fluent Japanese speaker who works for the Japanese Consulate, and who is a part of the Messy Church team.

### **Reading and Story Focus**

John 14: 27 and Sadako and the 1000 paper cranes

A good telling of Sadako's story can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wRabZXQ-hQ&t=5s>





Towards the end of Jesus' "Farewell Discourse" in the gospel of John, where Jesus is explaining to his disciple that he is going to die, and what this will mean for them, Jesus says these words:

*"My Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*

Sadako, a young child who survived the bombing of Hiroshima, is famous for her story of making 1,000 paper cranes to encourage peace around the world after the end of World War II. The Peace Garden in Hiroshima is world famous for its radical call for peace across the globe, at the site of one of the most violent and destructive acts humans have perpetrated: the dropping of an atomic bomb on a city of civilians.

- I wonder how these two stories might speak to us?
- I wonder if the kind of peace that Jesus suggests is similar to or different to the peace that Sadako calls for with her 1,000 paper cranes?

## Child-friendly song suggestions

May you find peace by Fischy Music

<https://www.fischy.com/fischy-music-online/songs/may-you-find-peace-with-re-collective-worship-resources/>

I've got Peace like a River 19

Peace will be with you 87 NCYC Songbook

For you, Deep Stillness (The Christmas Blessing) Robin Mann and Julie Perrin

## Interactive Prayer suggestion

**Activity:** Making paper cranes

The red-crowned crane is one of the most famous symbols of Japan, and a symbol of peace. When a person is sick, people will often make them a lei (or necklace) of 1,000 paper cranes to wish them good health and peace. After the bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, a little girl named Sadako made the folding of paper cranes very famous. Using the instructions provided here <https://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/origami/exploring02f.html>, make some paper cranes which we can use during our prayers for peace.



Photo: Sandy Brodine. Banyule Messy Church 2022.

## Talk about

Jesus said, “My peace I give you, my peace I leave you. Trouble not your hearts... be not afraid.”

When you are feeling frightened, what helps you to be brave and able to cope with what is going on?

## Prayer Time instructions:

During your prayer time, hand out the origami cranes, and/or make some crane cutouts (see photo) if you don't think you'll have enough origami cranes for everyone. Ask people to write their prayers on the cranes and then bring them to the front and place them on the communion table, or make a poster for people to attach their cranes.

## Possible Prayers for a Service on Sunday 21 September

### Franciscan Blessing

May God bless you with discomfort,  
at easy answers, half-truths,  
and superficial relationships  
so that you may live  
deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger  
at injustice, oppression,  
and exploitation of people,

so that you may work for  
justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears,  
to shed for those who suffer pain,  
rejection, hunger, and war,  
so that you may reach out your hand  
to comfort them and  
to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you  
with enough foolishness  
to believe that you can  
make a difference in the world,  
so that you can do  
what others claim cannot be done,  
to bring justice and kindness  
to all our children and people experiencing  
poverty.

Amen

### Prayer from Dorothy Day

Love and ever more love is the only solution to every problem that comes up.

If we love each other enough, we will bear with each other's faults and burdens.

If we love enough, we are going to light that fire in the hearts of others.  
And it is love that will burn out the sins and hatreds that sadden us.

It is love that will make us want to do great things for each other.

No sacrifice and no suffering will then seem too much.



## Peace Works

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*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matthew 5:9*

The Jesus of the Gospels lived under the brutal occupation of the Roman Empire. He speaks of peacemaking, love of enemies (Mt 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-36) and that those who live by the sword will die by the sword (Mt 26:52). In the face of oppression by certain religious leaders, he engaged in symbolic acts of non-violent resistance, such as healing on the Sabbath and over-turning the tables of the money-changers at the temple.

He does not join the Zealots who sought to end the Roman occupation through armed conflict.

Jesus engages in what we would see today as a non-violent movement for reform, which ultimately sees him executed by the authorities he challenges. His sacrifice and resurrection inspired the Jesus movement to grow and become Christianity. Mark and Paul Engler, in their 2016 work on non-violent campaigning, *This is an Uprising*, point to evidence that highlighting injustice through a public willingness to sacrifice builds movements today.

So, it turns out Jesus was onto something.

In 2011, Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan published a ground-breaking study into armed and non-violent resistance movements. In short, they found non-violent resistance movements were far more likely to succeed than their counterparts that relied on killing. Further, they were way more likely to lead to functional democracies, while armed struggle would be far more likely to result in brutal dictatorships and a return to civil war.

Chenoweth had studied military science and planned to become a US Army officer. She believed non-violent resistance was “well-intentioned, but dangerously naïve.” The study changed her mind.

Chenoweth and Stephan examined 223 armed and 100 non-violent resistance movements between 1900 and 2006 in their book *Why Civil Resistance Works*. They excluded wars between governments in their study.

They found non-violent movements were nearly twice as likely to succeed as those relying on armed conflict, as it was easier and less risky for people to support a non-violent movement. You do not need to know how to use an assault rifle to join a non-violent movement. Higher participation in non-violent movements leads to more tactical innovation. Further, members of the security forces are more likely to defect. It is also harder for a regime to get members of the security forces to murder people who are part of a non-violent movement.

Chenoweth updated her work in 2019 by publishing the book *Civil Resistance. What Everybody Needs to Know*. She found that between 1900 and 2019, nonviolent campaigns were successful 45% of the time, while violent campaigns only succeeded 22% of the time.

The participation of women in non-violent campaigns is crucial. Since 1945, very few civil resistance campaigns have succeeded if they have excluded women from active involvement. Women expand the social networks that the campaign can access and make the campaign more innovative.

The presence of those who use violence alongside a non-violent campaign undermines the likelihood that a non-violent campaign will succeed. The non-violent campaign becomes tarred with the same brush as those using violence, deterring people from joining the campaign. The violent fringe also provides justification for greater repression from oppressive governments. From 1900 to 2019, 65% of non-violent campaigns succeeded when no violent fringe was present. Once a violent



fringe was active, only 35% of non-violent campaigns succeeded.

As getting a movement to turn violent improves the chances that an oppressive government will stay in power, such governments have often infiltrated non-violent campaigns to try and steer them towards the use of violence. There is no example from 1900 to 2019 where paid undercover government agents infiltrated a civil resistance campaign to encourage it to become non-violent.

Non-violent campaigns also result in lower numbers of deaths compared to armed movements. Between 1946 and 2023, the average armed insurrection resulted in more than 2,800 killings per year, whereas the average unarmed revolution suffered about 105 killings per year.

Chenoweth and Stephan found that in 57% of cases, a country was a functioning democracy five years after a non-violent campaign succeeded. Among countries already democratic when the non-violent resistance campaign occurred, 82% remained democracies after the non-violent campaign succeeded. By contrast, only three of 55 successful armed struggles established

a functioning democracy. Many of those who carry out armed struggle get used to the idea that to make the world a better place, you need to kill the people who oppose you. Once in power, it becomes hard to shake off that idea.

When it comes to external support, Chenoweth and Stephan published a booklet in 2021, *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns. Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?* They found external support that provides training in non-violent tactics and small amounts of flexible funding can play a positive role in the success of non-violent movements. Too much external financing and a movement can look captured by foreign interests. International sanctions also boost the likelihood of success for a non-violent movement.

For armed resistance movements, they found that the actions of external parties to support the armed struggle had little or no impact on the conflict. Only military assistance from a foreign government could make a real difference. For example, think of US military support to the Afghan Mujahideen against the Russian occupation, which led to the rise of the Taliban. Statements of solidarity by external parties for the armed struggle





were likely to embolden the armed resistance movement to take greater unnecessary risks. The result was more deaths (particularly of their own forces) without influencing the outcome of the conflict.

From the works of Chenoweth and Stephan, we learn that churches can play a constructive and supportive role for non-violent movements taking on oppressive regimes or brutal foreign occupation, especially through funding. These movements are far more likely to result in lasting positive change. Jesus was onto something.

## Non-Violent Activists in the Palestinian–Israeli Conflict

Seeking a lasting peace to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict will mean meeting the legitimate needs of all the people involved. The final form of such peace is something Palestinians and Israelis will need to negotiate. Moral philosopher, Professor Jason Glover, has pointed out that “In identity-laden conflict, peace comes partly from gradual changes in how people see themselves and their opponents.” Thus,

peace groups that promote dialogue across divisions can assist in moving towards peace.

A practical step that we can take in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is to support groups dedicated to working towards a lasting peace through non-violent means. These groups lack resources for their essential work compared to those entities dedicated to on-going killings and murders, such as Hamas and the Netanyahu government.

Israeli Jews and Palestinians who take action to support a non-violent pathway to peace face persecution from the Netanyahu Government and Hamas for their courageous actions. They also face criticism from their own communities, who see them as traitors who are willing to acknowledge the pain on the other side.

What follows are examples of peace actions that you could mention as part of the service for the International Day of Peace.

### Gaza Youth Committee

Israeli Jewish peace activists have been holding protests against the war, holding up posters of Palestinian children killed in the war. In response, in early July 2025,

three members of the Palestinian peace organisation the Gaza Youth Committee posted a picture of themselves on social media standing in the rubble in Gaza holding pictures of four-year-old Ariel Bibas and his nine-month-old brother Kfir. Hamas militants kidnapped the two boys on 7 October 2023. They were returned to Israel a year later in coffins.

One of the Palestinian men holding the photos of the murdered Jewish children has had three of his own children murdered by Israeli forces in the war.

The protests by Jewish peace activists who hold pictures of murdered Gaza children have been targeted by Israeli police, who have termed them “provocative”.

Co-founder of the Gaza Youth Committee, Rami Aman, stated that the holding of the photos of the Jewish children who had

been murdered, “came from a desire to show Israelis and Palestinians, despite their suffering, still recognise the humanity of the ‘other’. It was never about justifying violence, but about pushing back against the idea that Palestinians celebrate death.” Rami said their message to Israelis was, “We feel your pain. We are against the killing of anyone – child, soldier or civilian.”

Rami said, “Some Gazans, especially youth, were encouraged by seeing the campaign and joined in. Others feared for their safety. There’s still deep fear here – of being misunderstood and punished for peace.”

The Gaza Youth Committee was founded in 2010 and currently has 500 active members who strive for peace. In 2018, Hamas launched balloons and kites fitted with incendiary devices that caused hundreds of fires in southern Israel. In response, 50





activists from the Gaza Youth Committee released 150 doves carrying messages of peace over the border from Gaza.

After a Zoom meeting with Israeli peace activists in 2020, Rami was arrested by Hamas and spent months in one of Gaza's notorious prisons. He was forced to divorce his wife, the daughter of a Hamas official, and was then released and exiled to Egypt.

### **Jewish Israelis arrested for opposing the war**

In June 2025, five Jewish protesters against the war were arrested in the northern city of Haifa for wearing t-shirts saying "stop the war". The Israeli police said the message on the t-shirts was illegal.

The Mayor of Haifa, Yona Yahav, told journalists, "I don't think freedom of expression should be exercised in Haifa."

### **Persecution of a Palestinian Member of Parliament for seeking peace**

Ayman Odeh is a Palestinian member of the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, and the Hadash-Ta'al party's leader. In July 2025, he faced impeachment for a tweet he posted on social media that stated:

*I am happy about the release of the hostages and the prisoners. We must now free both peoples from the yoke of occupation. Because we were all born free.*

Ayman has visited the families of hostages being held by Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. He stated, "I recognise their pain. The murder of innocent people must always be condemned. This is a moral principle I will never abandon. The crimes of Israel's occupation can never justify the killing of even a single innocent Israeli civilian on 7 October. And nothing that happened on October 7 can ever justify the killing of even one innocent Palestinian civilian in Gaza."

### **Israeli conscientious objector**

Sofia Orr, a 19-year-old Jewish woman, was imprisoned for 85 days for refusing to serve in the Israel Defence Force in mid-2024. She stated:

*I refuse to enlist to show that change is needed and that change is possible, for the security and safety of all of us in Israel-Palestine, and in the name of empathy that is not restricted by national identity. I refuse to enlist because I want to create a reality where all children between the Jordan River and the sea can dream without cages.*

*I realised that the army doesn't stand for the basic values I grew up with: resolving conflicts with dialogue, empathy, solidarity and equality, not in how soldiers are, but in how it conducts*







*itself externally in the occupation and war. It's a system that is inherently very aggressive and violent, and I cannot take part in any such system.*

*A system that dehumanises Palestinians will eventually dehumanise its soldiers. It's part of the same system that operates on power.*

Sofia's father had done military service and reserve duty. Despite that, her family was supportive of her decision.

Her decision not to fight in the war made her a target for hatred both inside Israel and from outside. Some Jewish Israelis called her a traitor, others told her she should be sent to Gaza to be blown up. There were also death threats and threats of being raped. From outside Israel, Sofia was told if she really cared, she would leave Israel as she is a settler or that she should support Hamas.

Sofia's response was, "The enemy of goodness and the future, of peace and security, isn't a 'side' or a nation, but the violent mindset of war and of continuing to use violence as a solution. The leadership, both Hamas and in our government, have for years been promoting this mindset alone, and have been influencing each other."

### **Parents Circle – Families Forum**

Najlaa is a 43-year-old Palestinian woman who left her family in Gaza when she was

20, moving to Hebron in the West Bank. In late December 2023, she was informed that Abed Al Rahman, her nephew, was killed by an Israeli air force bomb near Khan Yunis in Gaza. He was 28, married for two years and the father of 18-month-old twin boys. "He spoke with me every day, asked how my children and I were", she said. She joined Parents Circle – Families Forum, an organisation made up of Palestinians and Jews who have lost loved ones in the conflict and who campaign for peace.

"The situation is complicated, to be in a group that also has Jews during the ongoing war", she says. "Bereaved Israeli mothers strongly identified with my pain when I shared it with them. Some of them cried. I don't want to lose anyone else; enough already. We're tired of the war, we're tired of the loss."

Michal Halev's son, Laor Abramov, aged 20, was murdered by Hamas militants on 7 October 2023 after fleeing from a party to a shelter near Kibbutz Re'im. "I was never an activist. I was afraid to go to demonstrations. I always felt that I didn't know enough about the world to say something", she said. "My anonymity collapsed, but so did my fear of the world, because the worst had already happened. Therefore, I now want to say: enough." She joined the Parents Circle – Families Forum.

In 2024, 75 new members joined Parents Circle – Families Forum, bringing its



membership to over 800. They held 50 in-person and virtual forums, engaging thousands of Israeli and Palestinian youth and adults.

Over 100 Israeli and Palestinian members of Parents Circle – Families Forum assisted Palestinians in the West Bank village of Battir with their olive harvest. The olive harvest in the West Bank is often targeted by far-right Israeli settlers to stop Palestinians from being able to make a living, to drive them off the land.

### **Women Write Hope**

After the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas, Palestinian woman Ghadir Hani and Jewish woman Dror Rubin collected life stories of women working tirelessly to build understanding across the Jewish and Palestinian communities. The result was the book “Women Write Hope: Arab and Jewish Women Share Their Journeys Toward Peace and Reconciliation”. The book profiles 20 women – mothers, teachers, organisers – who have spent years fostering connection between people, communities and causes, often in quiet ways and at great personal cost.

Ghadir has said she hopes international readers will see the nuance of multiple truths. “People abroad often feel they have to choose a side – declare themselves pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian. I hope this book helps show just how much more complex the reality is, how many people from across the

spectrum are determined to put an end to war and extremism.”

The book is a reminder that peace isn’t a slogan or summit – it’s a daily decision to listen, to speak and to stay human, even when that feels impossible.

More details about the book and two chapters that can be downloaded in English can be found at the website <https://www.womenwritehope.com/>

## **Donating to Palestinian and Israeli Jewish Peace Organisations**

Your congregation could also financially contribute to one of the groups below.

### **Wi’am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre**

Wi’am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre is a grassroots Christian-led civil society organisation based in Bethlehem. They help resolve disputes within the Palestinian community at the grassroots level. They have programs that empower children, youth, women and men, addressing the psychological and physiological consequences of long-term conflict.

They promote non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation, based on experience from Northern Ireland, South Africa, civil rights movements and the struggles of First Peoples. They nurture spirituality and faith.

Further details about them can be found here: <https://www.alaslah.org/>

### **Refuser Solidarity Network**

The Refuser Solidarity Network are made up of Israelis who have refused military service in opposition to the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those refusing



military service are imprisoned. They provide advice, legal advice, counselling and support for those refusing military service.

More details can be found here: <https://www.refuser.org/>

## **Parents Circle – Families Forum**

The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF) is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organisation of over 800 families, all of whom have lost an immediate family member to the ongoing conflict. These families identified with a call to prevent bereavement and promote dialogue, tolerance, reconciliation, and peace. They work with bereaved parents to teach them to speak publicly for peace.

They have around 20 staff, with a rule that half must be Israeli and half Palestinian.

More details can be found on them at: <https://www.theparentscircle.org/>

## **Peace Now**

Peace Now is the largest and longest-standing Israeli movement advocating for

peace through the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Peace Now's activities include demonstrations, calls for action, lectures, debates, tours, and public campaigns.

In the early 1990s, after identifying illegal Israeli settlements as one of the largest obstacles to the two-state solution, Peace Now established Settlement Watch. Peace Now works to prevent settlement expansion and stop illegal settlement activity through research, analysis and exposure of settlement developments.

More information on them can be found here: <https://peacenow.org.il/en>

## **Standing Together**

Standing Together seeks to be a movement as a shared home for all those who refuse hatred and choose empathy. They believe in a true partnership based on shared interests.

They organise protests across Israel demanding economic equality, climate justice, and an end to the occupation of





the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They hold workshops on grassroots power and run candidates for student union elections. Their alternative media outlet, Rosa Media, produces Hebrew and Arabic podcasts highlighting underrepresented political stories and perspectives from across Israeli society. Their leadership is made up of both Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.

They have a network of Israelis to protect Palestinians from violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

More about them can be found here: <https://www.standing-together.org/en>

### **Holy Land Trust**

Holy Land Trust is a non-profit Palestinian organisation committed to fostering peace, justice and understanding in Palestine.

They are committed to exploring the root causes of violence and seeking to develop solutions to address them. They believe that true peace and justice are achieved through nonviolent activism, personal and

spiritual transformation and empowering the resilience of the local communities.

For more information and to donate, go to their website <https://holylandtrust.org/>

### **Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun**

Women Wage Peace is an Israeli-based women's organisation that brings together Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze women. Women Wage Peace (WWP) has grown to 50,000 Israeli members. The movement is non-partisan and does not support any one specific solution to the conflict. Instead, it empowers women from diverse communities to build trust across divides, leading in turn to a unified demand for diplomatic negotiation, with full representation of women, to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More details about them can be found here: <https://www.womenwagepeace.org.il/en/>

Women Wage Peace works closely with the Palestinian women's organisation Women of the Sun. Women of the Sun aims to reach



every woman in the Palestinian community in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem and in the diaspora, and to empower them politically and economically. More details about them can be found here: <https://womensun.org/>

## **Combatants for Peace**

Combatants for Peace is a grassroots movement of Israelis and Palestinians who believe in nonviolence and resisting oppression, united as partners in our joint nonviolent actions. They acknowledge the difference in power dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians and leverage their privileges in working together to co-resist injustice.

They seek collective liberation that acknowledges that the struggle for peace, security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis is interconnected. They recognise that the systems of oppression impact both communities, and that a genuine peace can only be achieved when all parties are free from the chains of occupation, discrimination, and inequality.

More details about their work and how to donate can be found at their website <https://www.cfpeace.org/>

## **A Land for All**

A Land for All is a joint Israeli-Palestinian political initiative founded by people who know the conflict not from headlines but from daily life. Since 2012, they have brought together activists, academics, diplomats, and thought leaders around the view that the land is home to two peoples. They believe any lasting resolution must affirm the equal right of both nations to self-determination, while honouring their unique identities, histories, and needs.

They believe a shared peaceful future requires a political framework that reflects interdependence, alongside the separate

needs of Palestinians and Jews. Without it, they feel both peoples will remain trapped in the cycles of fear, violence, and loss.

They envision two democratic, sovereign states - Israel and Palestine - linked together in a confederation with gradual steps toward freedom of movement and residence for all Israelis and Palestinians across a shared homeland. They argue their model offers national self-determination without domination, shared governance without erasing identity, and security without subjugation.

More information and how to donate can be found at their website <https://www.2s1h.org/>

## **Itach-Ma'aki - Centre for Women, Peace and Security**

Since 2001, Itach-Ma'aki: Women Lawyers for Social Justice has promoted the rights and voices of marginalised women. Their goal is to pave the way toward a shared society based on the values of gender equality, equal access to justice, and the integration of a gender lens into policy.





In June 2020, they established a Joint Palestinian-Israeli Steering Committee. The Committee seeks to mainstream gender into decision-making regarding peace and security.

In collaboration with Palestinian colleagues at the Jerusalem Centre for Women and other partners, they have trained over 100 Palestinian and Israeli women in senior positions from various backgrounds to engage in peace and security negotiations.

For more details and to donate, go to <https://www.itach.org.il/>

## **Autonomous Weapon Systems – Stopping Killer Robots**

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Governments and companies are rapidly developing weapons systems with increasing autonomy using new technology and artificial intelligence. Some of these weapon systems could make decisions to kill people without the involvement of any person in the decision.

These 'killer robots' could be used in conflict zones, by police forces and in border control. A machine should not be allowed to make a decision over life and death. The following letter-writing action invites you to take action to protect our humanity and make the world a safer place.

Drones and other advanced weapons are being developed with the ability to choose and attack their own targets without human control. Once thought to be in movies, autonomous weapons, or 'killer robots', are not a future problem anymore.

Machines can't make complex ethical choices. Machines are likely to make decisions based on biased and flawed processes. Emerging technologies like facial and vocal recognition often fail in recognising women and persons with disabilities. That means autonomous weapons can never be adequately programmed to substitute human decision-making.

Replacing troops with machines could make the decision to go to war easier. Moreover, these technologies could be used in policing





and border control. Despite these concerns, countries like Australia, the US, China, Israel, South Korea, Russia, and the UK continue to invest in autonomous weapons.

The governments of the US, UK, Israel and Türkiye have resisted the development of an international treaty to regulate the development of autonomous weapon systems.

We have an opportunity to act now. As companies and defence departments worldwide race to develop these technologies, we must act fast before we lose meaningful human control over the use of force, with devastating consequences.

### **Australia's involvement in autonomous weapons**

The ABC reported in October 2024 that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) unveiled autonomous weapons that were demonstrated at the Puckapunyal Army base in northern Victoria.<sup>1</sup> These included drones that fly themselves, robotic combat vehicles and an uncrewed tank. However, none of the weapons displayed were fully autonomous and required a level of human interaction.

The ADF is also developing a six-metre-long “Ghost Shark” uncrewed submarine. It is unclear if the Ghost Shark will be used as an autonomous weapon.

There was good news in November 2023, with the Australian Government voting at the UN supporting a resolution that urged the international community to consider the challenges posed by autonomous weapon systems.

### **Israel's involvement in autonomous weapon systems**

Human Rights Watch reported in September 2024 that the Israeli military is using digital tools in the war in Gaza.<sup>2</sup> They found that four digital tools that the Israeli military is using in Gaza use faulty data and inexact approximations to inform military actions. The Israeli military's use of these digital tools risks Israeli forces violating the laws of war, International Humanitarian Law. Human Rights Watch research indicated that the tools apparently rely on ongoing and systematic Israeli surveillance of all Palestinian residents of Gaza, including data collected before the current war. The tools use Palestinians' personal data to inform

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1 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-28/autonomous-weapons-ethics-defence-puckapunyal-ai-robotic-drones/104469990>

2 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/10/questions-and-answers-israeli-militarys-use-digital-tools-gaza>



military actions like threat predictions and the identification of targets.

Human Rights Watch couldn't document when and where the digital tools were being used or the extent to which the tools were used in conjunction with other information and intelligence collection methods. Nonetheless, the Israeli military's use of these tools, instead of helping to provide more accurate targeting and minimise the killing and maiming of civilians, may be exacerbating the risk to civilians and raising grave ethical, legal and humanitarian concerns.

### What you can do:

Please write polite and respectful letters to:

#### **The Hon. Richard Marles MP**

Minister for Defence  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

#### **The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**

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

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern about the development of autonomous weapons systems and the involvement of the Australian Government.
- Seek assurance that the Australian Defence Force will not use weapons systems to kill people without a human making the decision.
- Seek assurance that the Australian Government will not allow the sale of weapons systems that can kill people, with no person being involved in the decision to do so.
- Urge the Australian Government to support negotiations for new international law on autonomy in weapons systems - to ensure human control in the use of force and to prohibit machines that target people, reducing us to objects, stereotypes, and data points.





### **Justice and International Mission Cluster**

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**Uniting Church in Australia**  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



**equipping Leadership for Mission**  
Justice & International Mission



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**QUEENSLAND SYNOD**