



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY Inc.

Australian Jewish Community Promotes Debate

The Australian Jewish community's elected representative bodies are open and democratic, which is why the claims of the so-called "Independent Australian Jewish Voices" (Cut & Paste, 6/3) should not be treated at face value.

This group calls for "a just peace that recognises the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians with a solution that protects the human rights of all" as if that is not what the Jewish community's representative bodies have been advocating for many years. The leadership of the Australian Jewish community is a respected and credible voice in public forums precisely because we use reasoned argument and sound research to pursue sensible policies that reflect majority views.

The IAJV also calls for "reasoned argument rather than vilification and intimidation". This might be an attempt at self-criticism given the barrage of uninformed criticism directed at the Jewish community's elected leadership by some of the IAJV's signatories. Given the fact that the Executive Council of Australian Jewry has been at the forefront of fighting vilification and intimidation, not only of Jews but of all people who face unlawful vilification, it is difficult to understand why else they would have included this statement.

The IAJV then says that they seek "debate to further the prospects of peace, security and human rights in the Middle East". Anyone who is engaged in any meaningful way with the Jewish community, or has witnessed the many open forums such as the monthly public meetings of the respective Jewish umbrella bodies, knows that discussion and airing of diverse views is the norm.

The IAJV could take advantage of the democratic processes which elect the leadership of Australia's Jewish community and nominate for election to these bodies. That it chooses not to but, instead, implies that the Jewish community leadership acts in ways it does not, speaks volumes regarding its concern for democratic ideals.

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