



THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

1 JUN 2007

Mr Grahame J Leonard  
President  
Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc  
2nd Floor, 306 Hawthorn Road  
CAULFIELD SOUTH VIC 3162

Dear Mr Leonard

Thank you for your letter dated 9 May 2007 concerning South Africa's invitation to Hamas officials of the Palestinian National Unity Government to visit South Africa. The approach of South Africa to this issue of an invitation to Hamas is a matter for the Government of South Africa. I understand the issue has been the subject of considerable debate within South Africa itself.

As you are aware, Australia's approach to Hamas is quite different. It is a criminal offence in Australia to deal with assets of, or to make assets available to Hamas. Australia's aid to the Palestinian Territories (\$16.2 million in 2006-07) does not go directly to the Palestinian Authority, but rather is distributed through the United Nations and other non government organisations.

It is also Australian Government policy that officials avoid contact with Hamas members of the recently formed Palestinian National Unity Government, although contact with non-Hamas members is generally permitted.

Thank you for bringing your views to the attention of the Government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Downer', written in a cursive style.

Alexander Downer