

# Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

הוועד הפועל של  
יהודי אוסטרליה

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## **STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEADS OF CHURCHES STATEMENT ON PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

The President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry Robert M Goot AM SC, today issued the following statement in response to the "The Heads of Churches Statement on Palestine and Israel":

Those who subscribed to the "Heads of Churches Statement on Palestine and Israel" issued in Canberra on 4 June 2008 may be motivated by good intentions but the Statement manifests a serious lack of balance and misrepresents what is required to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Statement refers to the "dispossession" of the Palestinians, without providing the vital historical context. It ignores the UN resolution to partition the country between the two peoples, the fateful decision of the Arab leadership to resort to force in defiance of the UN, and the ensuing military invasion of the country and war of extermination by the armies of five Arab states. Most of the proposed Palestinian state was seized by Egypt and Jordan.

The Statement expresses no compassion for the similarly large number of Jews who were expelled from Arab countries after 1948, after being stripped of their citizenship, property and livelihoods, and who were resettled in Israel.

The Statement also ignores a second attempt by the Arab states to wipe Israel off the map in 1967, as a result of which Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and ignores also the fact that Israel has since withdrawn from large parts of that territory, most recently from Gaza in 2005.

While there is undoubtedly suffering on both sides, the Statement is conspicuously silent on the openly expressed ambitions of Hamas, Hezbollah, and their sponsor Iran, to eliminate Israel and drive out or exterminate its Jewish population.

The Statement also loses moral authority by failing to mention and condemn the deliberate and systematic targeting of Israel's civilian population by Palestinian terrorist organisations.

It is surprising that a statement by Christian leaders fails to acknowledge that Jews and Christians elsewhere in the Middle East are often persecuted, and their holy sites desecrated, whereas Israel has a proud record of protecting all faiths and their respective holy sites.

Most tellingly, the Statement entertains the possibility of a so-called "one state solution", which all realistic observers of the Middle East recognise would mean the destruction of Israel.

International inquiries into the conflict since 1937, landmark resolutions of the UN since 1947, signed agreements between Israel and the PLO, and statements issued by the Quartet, comprising the United Nations, the European Union, Russia and the United States, have accepted that two States for two peoples is the only just and achievable solution.

At a time when negotiations are continuing between Israel and the Palestinians, and between Israel and Syria, a statement calling for international pressure on the parties is less than helpful.

We note with appreciation that a large number of members of the National Council of Churches in Australia have not subscribed to the Statement.

**4 June 2008**