



Executive Council
of Australian Jewry Inc.

STATEMENT

18 December 2018

ALP position on Israel-Palestinian conflict

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the peak representative body of the Australian Jewish community, has responded to the resolution on the Israel-Palestinian conflict which was passed today by the ALP National Conference, and to recent statements made by ALP leaders concerning recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The following joint statement was made by ECAJ President Anton Block and co-CEOs, Peter Wertheim and Alex Ryvchin.

"Whilst the ALP National Conference resolution falls a long way short of the immediate and unconditional recognition of a Palestinian State which some sections of the ALP have been advocating for several years, and will not be binding on any future Labor government, the tenor of resolutions passed at recent ALP conferences has been in that direction.

Unilateral recognition of a Palestinian State can only act as a disincentive, rather than an encouragement, to Israel and the Palestinians to resume negotiations, in effect pre-empting the outcome of one of the key issues to be negotiated.

In contrast, recognising that Israel's seat of government is located in the western part of Jerusalem, which is incontestably sovereign Israeli territory, does not in any way impact upon or pre-empt the future status of the contested eastern and other parts of the city captured by Israel in 1967. The ALP's announcement that, in government, it would reverse Australia's recent recognition of west Jerusalem as Israel's capital was therefore hasty and ill-advised.

The ALP National Conference resolution calling for recognition of a Palestinian State overlooks the reality that no Palestinian entity presently exists which meets even the most minimal of the legal and practical criteria for statehood - a government capable of exercising control over its people and territory, and delivering on international agreements.

To the ALP's credit, and thanks to the leadership of ALP leader Bill Shorten, Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong and their colleagues Richard Marles, Mark Dreyfus, Mike Kelly and Michael Danby among others, the goal of a just and lasting two-state

resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict remains embedded in the ALP policy platform, and this continues to represent the bipartisan consensus in Australia.

Nevertheless, it is a misguided approach by advocates of unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state to place the onus exclusively on Israel for the impasse in achieving a two-State resolution of the conflict, and does nothing to encourage the Palestinian leadership to remedy their obvious shortcomings, and to act like a responsible government. Instead, it rewards them for their failures.

Further, Palestinian organisations have appalling records on the rights of women, LGBTIQ people and workers. The Hamas attitude towards Israel and its Jewish citizens is openly genocidal, as its notorious Charter makes all too clear.

Any proposal for aid to the Palestinians will need to be subject to the most careful prudential controls in order to ensure that the aid goes to ordinary Palestinians who are in need of it. The mistakes of the past, where Palestinian aid has been misappropriated by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to fund or incite terrorism and for other improper purposes, must not be repeated.

We look forward to continuing to work constructively with Bill Shorten and his parliamentary colleagues to find ways by which Australia can contribute meaningfully to a two-State outcome, based on an honest understanding of the realities of the conflict in all their tragic complexity.”

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