



Executive Council of Australian Jewry

הוועד הפועל של יהודי אוסטרליה

GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW AUSTRALIA'S RECOGNITION OF WEST JERUSALEM AS THE CAPITAL OF ISRAEL

18 October 2022

We are extremely disappointed by the Government's decision to withdraw Australia's recognition of west Jerusalem as the capital of Israel without public consultation or opportunity for public debate, and in a conspicuously opaque manner. Stakeholders have simply been presented with a *fait accompli*. That is not consultation.

The timing of this morning's cabinet decision was clearly media-driven. The status of Jerusalem is an important foreign policy issue, and it is demeaning for Australia to have its international position changed in such a shoddy manner.

This Government has been highly critical of the previous Prime Minister for making key policy decisions "by stealth" to evade "public accountability". The government's decision to change Australia's position on west Jerusalem suffers from precisely these defects.

Aside from being poor policy, the withdrawal of Australia's recognition that Israel's capital is in Jerusalem is a gratuitous insult to a key economic and strategic ally, with no countervailing benefit for Australians. This is no way to treat an ally whose intelligence-sharing with Australia has prevented at least one terrorist attack against Australians that we know of.

This decision panders to the most extreme elements of the Labor Party and will also serve as a disincentive for the Palestinians to return to negotiations. Jerusalem is and will remain the capital of Israel, the site of its parliament, supreme court, Ministerial offices and President's residence. West Jerusalem has been part of Israel's territory since the State was established in 1948.

The arguments advanced by opponents of recognition of west Jerusalem as Israel's capital, namely that it would ignite unrest in the Arab world, were shown to be manipulative and inaccurate, as five Arab countries have signed normalisation agreements with Israel in the intervening period.

We further note with regret that this decision was communicated to us on the Jewish holyday of Simchat Torah, when we were precluded from making any public response. There is a bitter irony in the fact that the government made its decision in the way that it did on a day when Jews celebrate receiving the Torah, the ethical basis of western civilisation.



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