



JOINT STATEMENT BY THE ZIONIST FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY

12 November 2023

We, the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), are highly concerned by the comments made by Foreign Minister Penny Wong on *ABC Insiders* this morning.

The Foreign Minister stated that “we all want to take the next steps towards a ceasefire,” while noting that no ceasefire could be “one-sided.”

But unless and until Hamas is removed from power, a ceasefire will inevitably further endanger Israel.

Hamas leaders have publicly stated that Hamas will continue to repeat its 7 October massacres until Israel is eventually annihilated. Hamas being in power in Gaza is an intolerable threat to Israel, as world leaders – including in Australia – recognised in the wake of 7 October.

Any ceasefire that does not involve the return of the hostages and the removal of Hamas from power will only entrench Hamas and embolden Israel’s other genocidal enemies, like Hezbollah. It will guarantee more war and human suffering for all.

In addition, we refer to the Minister’s assertion that the hospitals and medical facilities that Hamas burrows itself into are protected under international law and her call for Israel to “cease the attacking of hospitals.”

We remind the Government that Article 19 of the Geneva Convention explicitly states that hospitals lose their protection if they are used for military purposes. It is incontrovertible that Hamas uses Shifa and other hospitals for military purposes. There is no evidence that Israel is not observing the laws of armed conflict.

The libel that any Israeli attack on Gazan hospitals from which Hamas operates would amount to war crimes only serve to demonise the state of Israel and its supporters. These libels are central to Hamas’ objectives as a terrorist organisation, and are reverberating across the world in a new wave of antisemitism.

The Government of Australia should not be lending any credibility to this false and harmful narrative. Instead, it should unequivocally state that Hamas is morally and legal responsible for the suffering of civilians in Gaza as a result of starting this war and its dozens of war crimes that purposefully endanger Palestinian civilians for tactical and propaganda advantage.