

ACCJ STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT HOSTILITIES IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

The Australian Council of Christians and Jews (ACCJ) is an organisation which seeks to foster dialogue, diversity, respect and understanding of the other between the Jewish and Christian traditions, within each of the Jewish and Christian communities and the community at large.

In the face of the tragic loss of innocent civilian lives in Gaza and the threat to the population of Israel from rocket and mortar strikes and tunnel raids from Gaza, the ACCJ expresses its anguish and its call for an end to hostilities.

We pray that a just, lasting and durable peace can be found by the Palestinian people and Israel with the assistance of intervening parties such as Egypt which itself has a stake in achieving stability in the region.

As an organisation of Christians and Jews, we reaffirm the value of each individual life that is lost. We are not a political organisation, but an organisation whose remit is the establishment and maintenance of dialogue between those of different faiths through the prism of Jewish-Christian dialogue. These faiths, some of which have a history of hostility between them that is much older than the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and are thus, well placed to assist in faith-based solutions to conflict and disputes.

We acknowledge that on both sides in this conflict there are narratives of loss and belonging. We acknowledge the right of the Jewish people to a place of sanctuary and home in the place their ancestors called home and which their prophets and rabbis held out as a beacon of light in the midst of despair. We call for full recognition by all those in the region who are people of faith, of the right of the State of Israel to exist and be a homeland for the Jews and for Israelis to live normal, peaceful lives within that State or anywhere they might travel.

We equally acknowledge that the people of Palestine experienced deprivation and expulsion from the place they called home in the wake of the founding of the modern state of Israel and we call for full recognition of the right of Palestinians to self-determination and their right to have a state of their own in which to live normal peaceful lives in freedom, living alongside the State of Israel in peace and recognition of the State of Israel.

We consider that the continued construction of settlements in areas where both sides have agreed (or are likely to agree that) a Palestinian state is proposed to be located, is unhelpful to the process of gaining peace and a two-state solution.

We do not believe that either of the conflicting narratives of belonging and home sanctions the wanton destruction of the other.

We know that in the fog of war, truth is often the first casualty and we hope that there can be reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians and a just solution.

While acknowledging the right of the Jews to have a home in Israel, we weep with anguish for the loss of men, women and children, the civilians who are victims in Gaza. Similarly we weep for the senseless loss of Israeli lives both civilian and military sacrificed in war.

We hope that ultimately there will be an end in a negotiated peace to hostilities, mistrust and enmity between Israel and the Palestinians.

We call for the recognition by both sides of the humanity of the other. We counsel against the increasing fostering of racialised hatred against Muslims and Arabs by ultra nationalist elements in Israel and elsewhere in the world, and we counsel against hatred directed towards Jews in Israel and elsewhere in the world by those who misguidedly or intentionally invoke anti-Semitism in all its ugly forms.

William Szekely
Chair, ACCJ

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