



الاتحاد الاسترالي للمجالس الاسلامية  
**AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION  
OF ISLAMIC COUNCILS INC.**  
AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL ISLAMIC ORGANISATION  
A.R.B.N. 002 757 155

31 December 2008

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Christmas Island

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Over 100

The Hon. Stephen Smith, MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600

Dear Mr Smith,

I welcome and commend your Government's stand and actions on a number of issues since it has been in office.

In recent years Australia played a commendable role in bringing peace and security to the East Timorese people. It overturned its 25 year policy, opposed and antagonised its largest neighbour, mobilised international support, engaged its armed forces and committed Australian tax payer's money to achieve independence for the East Timorese people and continues to support the people of East Timor to achieve their self rule and economic independence. Australia did the right thing, whilst disregarding any political or economic consequences for itself.

However, the total silence of Australia in the midst of the terrible crisis now facing the people of Palestine is deafening.

It seems that for some reason, the Australian Government has totally ignored the fact that several thousand Australian families have their kith and kin amongst the sufferers of the terror unleashed by the State of Israel on the people of Palestine. It is easy to say that these people, who came to Australia to enjoy a better living standard, must totally forget their roots and family left behind, as some assert in a naive and arrogant manner. This defies common wisdom and betrays a total inability to understand the human mind.

The Muslim and Christian Arab people are upset and angry about what is going on in their former homelands. They are also angry with the Government of Australia for its lack of action or even to speak up or exhibit some sympathy for those suffering in the conflict. The Muslims and Christians of Australia must also be concerned about the safety and security of their holy places in Palestine.

The Muslims of Australia are concerned that the Australian Government has always displayed double standards when it comes to issues of the Middle East, and especially Palestine. Whilst hundreds of Palestinian civilians are being killed and many thousands injured by Middle East's most powerful army and sanctioned by the State of Israel, Australia is completely silent. Whilst your Government celebrated the Israel's formation in the Australian Parliament this year, there was a complete lack of any real initiative to use this close relationship with Israel to progress work on a homeland for the Palestinian people.

We want you to know that the Muslims of Australia are concerned about your Government's silence. Whilst on the one hand the State of Israel speaks about peace and co-operation, and at the highest level even with the President of the most powerful nation on earth, on the other hand it bombs and kills civilians and tests ballistic missiles.

The real face of the crisis has now been exposed and all good thinking nations of the world must act now to bring the pressures necessary for real peace. Justice must be done and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in freedom, security and prosperity must be recognised as must be the case for the people of Israel. Australia, as the advocate of peace, justice and human rights must take a stand on the world stage and ignore the pressures that will undoubtedly be unleashed from the Zionist and the Israeli lobby. Australia must understand that there will be no peace in the region without resolving the Palestinian questions, which have been ignored for more than 50 years during which a whole generation has grown up in tents without knowing any peace or having any hope.

Minister, the Muslim community of Australia has great hopes and expectations that your government will take the high moral ground on a number of issues, some of which may be at odds with the Labour Party's previous official stand on these matters. As a new Government we appeal to you to show leadership and courage in this crisis by positive and immediate actions. We urge you to establish a new position for Australia on the international stage by your actions for justice and human rights for the Palestinian people irrespective of their faith.

Your Government has already made the tough decisions on climate change by signing the Kyoto Agreement, said sorry to the indigenous people, made the necessary changes to the detention policy of asylum seekers and many similar long standing and simmering issues that had given Australia a perception in the international community as a harsh country. Your government has once again established Australia's place as a country of inclusiveness and one where the concept of "fair go" is truly embedded in every thing we do.

The Patriarchs, Arch-Bishops and heads of all Christian Churches in Palestine have strongly condemned Israel's aggression in the past and on the sanctity of the holy places of Muslims and Christians.

The brutal actions of the Israeli government will not bring peace to Israel or to Palestine and the Middle East. Nor will the subsequent crude mortar attacks or other acts of violence from the Palestinians.

Will Australia not show courage and act according to her heart and conscience? Will she not act with justice to alleviate the pain and suffering of a whole generation of people? We will be behind you and your Government and we are sure that all Australians will do the same when you act to seek justice and humanity for the suffering people of Palestine and indeed Israel. This will guarantee peace and security which the citizens of Israel and Palestine are also seeking.

We have no doubts that the ordinary people of Israel would like to live side by side in peace with their Arab neighbours including the people of Palestine. And there have been many instances when these same Israeli citizens have opposed the actions of their Government. We are convinced that they would be appalled with the indiscriminate bombing of the Palestinian people by fighter jets, just the same as the Palestinian people would be appalled by the launching of mortars and shells into Israel.

It is quite apparent that the leaders in Israel right now are trying to out muscle each other just before the elections. Both the Defence Minister and the Foreign Minister in Israel need to demonstrate their toughness as contenders for the PM

position. But this should not be at the expense of innocent women and children of Palestine.

It is now time for Australia to stand up with the international community to condemn this violence from both sides in the strongest of words.

We would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance that the Australian Government has made and pledged to the Palestinian people. The Australian Government should also ask the Israeli Government to lift its blockade of Palestine so that the people are not frustrated into extremism which does not in any way help to fight terrorism in the world.

We seek an urgent meeting with your self to discuss these concerns of the Australian Muslims and to suggest ways that could assist the process of reconciliation. I am aware that the members of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) as well as the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) together with the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) was organising a meeting with your self on various matters concerning the Middle East. We would be happy for this joint meeting to be held at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely,



Ikebal Adam Patel,  
***President of AFIC.***

CC: Leaders of All Political Parties in Australia.  
Secretary-General, United Nations.  
Secretary-General, Organisation of Islamic Conference.