

## UNAA statement on the situation in the Middle East

- The United Nations Association of Australia is committed to a just peace in the middle east and seeks the immediate cessation of violence against civilians.
- The war can only be ended when there is serious willingness to return to negotiations for a two state solution. That cannot happen while organised violence continues.
- We recognise the first and incremental agreements to cease hostilities for the exchange of hostages and provision of humanitarian aid was a fragile step in the right direction.
- The impacts of armed conflict on people in Israel and Gaza are abhorrent, traumatic and intolerable. Particularly to the great extent that they impact children, women and innocent civilians. We extend our empathy to our fellow humans caught in this crisis.
- We also extend our empathy to the families of journalists and UN staff who have been injured, killed, or fallen out of communication in unprecedented numbers in this crisis.

*"More United Nations aid workers have been killed than in any comparable period in the history of our organization."*

Antonio Guterres Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General United Nations

- We see the impact of the crisis as it is felt in Australian communities – as Jewish and Palestinian communities and their families, friends, neighbours and colleagues process the personal and human cost of conflict and express their frustration at the capacity of our national and multilateral organisations to create safety and security.
- We extend our empathy to our fellow Australians who are distant from their family, friends and colleagues at this time of crisis and frustrated by our seeming incapacity to respond.
- We are concerned by the rising incidences of antisemitism and Islamophobia which undermine the Australian community's confidence in diversity and acceptance. We join the Foreign Minister Senator the Hon Penelope Wong in rejecting hate, and condemning prejudice and discrimination in all its forms.
- The UN is designed to act on behalf of all nations to diffuse conflict, restore the rule of law, promote human rights, and deliver peacekeeping and humanitarian services.
- The UN will always draw attention to the fact that signatories to the United Nations Charter have a responsibility to uphold the Charter, and the subsequent international law, Geneva Conventions and human rights principles and law.

United Nations Association of Australia

Patrons - Their Excellencies Governor General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd)  
and Mrs Hurley

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- The United Nations, through its agencies, programs and funds seeks to address the immediate crisis but to do so in a manner which tackles the underlying crisis in the region – to establish the conditions for careful and deliberate negotiations towards an enduring solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace.
- We acknowledge the limitations in the design of the UN Security Council when faced with conflicts such as this. This crisis underlines the need for reform of the Security Council, important work that is underway but will take more time than this crisis affords.
- We note that on 15 November, the Security Council adopted resolution [2712](#) with 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (Russia, the UK, and the US) following the failure in October of four Security Council resolutions on the crisis in Israel and Gaza. Among other matters, the resolution:
  - demands that all parties comply with their international law obligations, “notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children”;
  - calls for “extended humanitarian pauses and corridors” in the Gaza Strip for “a sufficient number of days” to enable, among other things, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to facilitate the provision of essential goods and services as well as “rescue and recovery efforts, including for missing children in damaged and destroyed buildings”;
  - calls for the release of “all hostages held by Hamas and other groups, especially children”; and
  - calls on all parties to refrain from depriving the civilian population in Gaza of “basic services and humanitarian assistance indispensable to their survival”.<sup>1</sup>
- We encourage and support all parties who are working to create the conditions for an ongoing ceasefire that ends the launch of rockets into populated areas of Israel and Gaza. Israel’s bombing and shelling of Gaza has already destroyed a large proportions of housing, hospitals and schools in Gaza and prevented the provision of much desperately needed humanitarian care.
- We hope that an ongoing ceasefire would diminish the significant risk that this crisis extends across the Middle East; and that it would lead to an international peacekeeping initiative to begin disarmament of both Hamas and Israel, and withdrawal of all Israeli military personnel from Gaza. These would be vital steps towards renewed negotiations to towards a two state solution based on mutual peace and security for the people of both Israel and Palestine.

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## Context of our statement

On 7 October 2023, Palestinian armed groups in Gaza launched thousands of rockets toward Israel and breached through the perimeter fence of Gaza at multiple locations, entering into Israeli towns and killing and capturing Israeli forces and civilians. The Israeli military declared “a state of war alert,” and began striking targets in the Gaza Strip, including residential buildings and health care facilities.<sup>2</sup>

Figures provided by Israeli authorities cited by OCHA, indicate that over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed in Israel, the vast majority on 7 October. Over 200 hostages were taken into the Gaza Strip during the 7 October attacks.

Figures provided by Palestinian officials in Gaza cited by OCHA indicate that as at 23 November, over 14,800 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza. More than 1.8 million people in the Gaza strip, representing nearly 80 percent of the population, are estimated to be internally displaced and, as at 24 November, over 60 percent of the total housing stock in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

Ends

<sup>1</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4027698?ln=en> sourced 24 November 2023

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/situation-in-occupied-palestine-and-israel> sourced 24 November 2023

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/situation-in-occupied-palestine-and-israel> sourced 24 November 2023

## References

This situation is complex, fluid and ongoing. You may find these references helpful for current, accurate information.

For updates on UN actions please refer to the UN General Assembly [Newsroom](#), [What's In Blue](#), the newsletter of the UN Security Council and [reports](#) from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east.

For media releases, transcripts, speeches and opinion from our Foreign Minister please refer to the [official website](#).

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