



29 March 2024

## PALESTINE/ISRAEL CONFLICT

Dear Penny Wong,

Thank you for your email dated Wednesday 27 March which explained the Australian government's position with respect to a number of the aspects of the horrific situation in the Middle East.

Quakers Australia welcomes hearing that the government has resumed funding for UNRWA and is supporting other humanitarian efforts; that the government is encouraging a humanitarian ceasefire in the region; is working to avert a ground offensive of Rafah; that the government considers settlements a major impediment to peace and supports non-violent resolution towards a two state solution.

However, in spite of the best efforts and statements by Australia and many other countries, including the US, Israel remains determined in its destructive course of action.

You said recently that Israel would continue to lose support internationally unless it changed course. We suggest it is time for Australia, preferably in concert with countries such as NZ and Canada, to back up such a warning by recalling its ambassador to Israel "for consultations"

There is much to consult about: a ceasefire; relieving the nightmare in Gaza; release of captives on both sides. Recalling the ambassador would send a clear message that some of Israel's friends are strongly opposed to Israel's relentless military pursuit of Hamas, with no regard to the huge cost in Palestinian lives and livelihoods. A working break for the ambassador in Canberra might help to develop ideas for a two-state solution, which Australia supports.

Following the International Court of Justice Order of 26 January 2024, the Australian government has a responsibility to ensure Australia is not complicit in any acts of genocide by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, in addition to requesting the recall of the ambassador, we ask for

- a suspension of any weapons transfer from Australia to the region while the current conflict continues.
- a public assurance from the government that the Pine Gap facility is not involved in any way with the targeting of Gaza by the Israeli Defence Force.

The present situation in the Middle East is unacceptable and many feel powerless. These are three further steps which the Australian government could take which would signal to Israel and the US and, most importantly to Australians, that we stand for protection of the Palestinian people and for negotiations towards a just peace in the region.

Sincerely,



Bruce Henry  
Presiding Clerk  
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia