



Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

FAQ TO ACCOMPANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ON PALESTINE 16 May 2025

This FAQ has been provided by the Uniting Church Assembly to accompany its public statement regarding Palestine, released on 16 May 2025.

1. Why does this statement focus so heavily on Palestinian suffering and actions by the State of Israel? Is the Uniting Church not concerned about Israeli suffering and the threat to Israeli civilians?

The statement is a response to the overwhelming and urgent suffering currently being experienced in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, particularly following the escalated military operations and humanitarian crisis since the broken ceasefire.

Our Church has consistently condemned violence against all civilians, including attacks by Hamas and other groups that led to over 1100 civilian deaths in Israel in October 2023. We continue to grieve all loss of life and pray for the safety and dignity of all people in Israel and Palestine.

However, at this moment, the scale and nature of the violence against Palestinians, the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding, and the credible concerns of violations of international law demand focused moral clarity. Naming the actions of the State of Israel is not an abandonment of our belief in Israel's right to exist in peace and security. It is a necessary act of solidarity with those currently enduring extraordinary suffering.

2. Does this statement deny Israel's right to defend itself or exist as a state?

No. The Uniting Church has consistently affirmed the right of both Israel and Palestine to exist in peace and security.

This statement does not question Israel's existence, but it does question actions by the State of Israel and its military that, according to international human rights organisations and the United Nations, may amount to war crimes or even genocide. These actions must be named and fully investigated, as part of the Church's call for justice, human rights and human dignity.

3. Is this statement antisemitic or could it be read as contributing to antisemitism?

No. The Uniting Church unequivocally rejects all forms of antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and hatred. Critiquing the actions of the Israeli government and military is not an

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attack on Jewish people or Judaism. In fact, many Jewish organisations and individuals, both in Israel and globally, have raised similar concerns and calls for justice. The statement affirms that true peace cannot be built on dehumanisation of any people.

4. Why does the statement reference possible genocide? Isn't this inflammatory and legally premature?

The statement reflects the growing and credible concerns raised by respected international bodies such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. The ICJ has accepted a case brought by South Africa alleging that Israel's actions may constitute genocide, and provisional measures have been ordered.

The Uniting Church is not declaring that genocide has occurred, but is supporting the right and necessity of this question to be fully investigated under international law. As a Church committed to peace with justice, we believe all allegations of such severity must be taken seriously by the global community.

5. Why doesn't the Uniting Church just plainly call it a genocide?

We are deeply alarmed and grieved by the scale of violence, destruction, and suffering, and with many other churches worldwide, with the World Council of Churches, and even the late Pope Francis, we call for allegations of potential genocide to be investigated to their full extent. We support the current investigation before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

However, we also believe that the global community does not, and should not, need to wait for a formal legal ruling before acting on the humanitarian crisis unfolding now. We need urgent, courageous action to end the violence, ensure humanitarian access, and uphold the dignity and rights of all people. In raising these concerns, we call the world to its moral responsibility, not just its legal obligations.

6. Why does the statement not call out Hamas or other Palestinian groups for their violence?

The Uniting Church has resolved to condemn any atrocities and brutalities regardless of who commits them, including the devastating 7 October 2023 attacks by Hamas and the ongoing holding of Israeli hostages in Gaza. This remains part of our public witness.

This particular statement is a response to the humanitarian crisis unfolding now, largely as a result of state actions by Israel. We do not seek to excuse or justify violence by Palestinian groups, but at this moment, our priority is to respond to the scale of suffering facing the civilian Palestinian population.

7. Is the Uniting Church taking sides in this conflict?

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The Uniting Church takes the side of justice, human dignity and the protection of life. We take the side of peace and the rejection of violence by all parties. In this context, to be faithful to our values, we must name and oppose the disproportionate injustices currently being inflicted upon the Palestinian people. We affirm our care and concern for Palestinians, Israelis and Jewish communities around the world.

8. Does this statement imply support for boycotts, divestment or sanctions (BDS) against Israel?

This statement does not explicitly endorse the global BDS movement. However, it does call for specific targeted sanctions on Israeli settlers involved in documented human rights abuses, consistent with the resolution of the Assembly Standing Committee and similar actions by other governments. This is aligned with our calls to the Australian government for accountability and transparency around Australia's weapons exports and human rights obligations.

9. How does this statement reflect the Uniting Church's theology and values?

At the heart of this statement is the belief that as followers of the crucified and risen Christ, we are called to stand with the oppressed, advocate for justice, and pursue peace grounded in dignity and truth. Our commitment is rooted in the Gospel call to love our neighbour, to seek justice, and to speak against systems of violence and oppression wherever they are found.

We recognise our failure to always speak clearly in the past, and this statement is an act of repentance and a recommitment to faithful witness.

10. How should Uniting Church members respond if they disagree with the statement?

The President acknowledges that the Uniting Church is a diverse community with a range of views on this complex issue. The statement invites prayerful reflection, dialogue, education, and advocacy, always grounded in our core values of justice, peace, and the dignity of all people.

Members are encouraged to read the statement carefully, engage respectfully, and bring their concerns into open, courageous conversations within the Church community.

If you would like to contact the Assembly about the statement, please email the Assembly Communications Unit: comms@nat.uca.org.au