



Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

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**Uniting Church in Australia Expresses Solidarity with suffering Palestine and Calls
for Allegations of Genocide to be Fully Investigated**

Uniting Church in Australia President Rev Charissa Suli

In this season of Easter, as we proclaim 'Christ is risen!' and life is stronger than death, we cannot help but hear the cries that rise from the tombs of this world. In the lands where Jesus walked, the cries of the wounded, hungry and grieving fill the air.

As President of the Uniting Church in Australia, I am compelled to speak with moral clarity, compassion, and a heart broken open by the suffering we are witnessing. We cannot remain silent while bodies are broken beneath bombs, children starve, and our Palestinian siblings in Christ fear for their very existence. If we do not speak, even the stones will cry out.

With humility and repentance, we confess that our voice has not always been clear or courageous in naming the immense and disproportionate suffering faced by the people of Palestine, which demands our urgent moral attention. We lament our silences and hesitation. We know we cannot claim peace as our prayer if we have not named the injustices we see.

For more than seven decades, Palestinians have lived under the weight of occupation. On 7 October 2023, a horrific attack by Hamas militants in Israel claimed over 1,100 lives and saw 250 people taken hostage. In the wake of this violence, a ferocious retaliation was unleashed. For 19 long months the Palestinian people have endured merciless bombardment. Homes, hospitals, sacred places of worship, and centres of learning lie in ruins. Nearly two million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced. Medical workers, journalists, and humanitarian servants have been targeted and killed.

50,000 Palestinian lives – many of them women and children – have been stolen with unspeakable cruelty. For those who live, there is nowhere safe to go. We believe unequivocally that this desecration of human life is an outrage, a grievous wound in the heart of God.

The fragile hope of a ceasefire was shattered in March when Israeli military forces resumed their assault, sending a new wave of devastation across a traumatised, exhausted and grieving people. Israel sealed off crossings into the Gaza Strip for over 10 weeks, cutting desperate people off from food, water, and medicine, and defying international law. Three weeks ago, the UN World Food Program announced it had

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exhausted all humanitarian and food supplies. The situation is desperate. An avoidable and human-made famine is unfolding in full view of the world.

It is believed that 58 Israeli hostages continue to be held in Gaza. An unknown number of Palestinians, believed to be in the thousands, are imprisoned without charge in Israel under so-called administrative detention.

Violence is escalating in the West Bank, as settler attacks, military raids, mass displacements and arrests tear apart communities and lives. Injustices deepen in East Jerusalem, where threats to sacred spaces and freedom of worship strike at the heart of a city meant to be a home for many peoples, many faiths.

Our Christian siblings in Palestine plead: *“Why are you indifferent to our suffering? Do not remain silent.”* Bound to them in Christ, we answer their call to unwavering solidarity. We stand with them in defending the dignity and presence of Palestinians in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We oppose any action or plan to annexe the Palestinian territories, and the now openly-stated intention to re-occupy Gaza and permanently displace the Palestinian population. As followers of Jesus, we cannot turn away while Palestinians face erasure from their homeland, their stories, their identity.

We join the growing number of global voices, including the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, who raise grave, credible concerns that the actions of the State of Israel in Gaza may amount to genocide. This question is before the International Court of Justice and should be investigated to its fullest extent. Plausible allegations of genocide, war crimes, and violations of international law demand not only our sorrow and outrage, but urgent global attention and accountability.

To leaders across the global community: you are standing at a moral crossroads. How much more suffering before you are compelled to act? You must take brave, principled action to end the violence which is an affront to humanity, uphold international law and insist upon the dignity and security of every person in the Holy Land.

As the Uniting Church, our longing remains the same as always: peace, true peace, in and between Palestine and Israel. In this, we grieve every life lost – Israeli and Palestinians – and reject all violence against civilians. We reject all hatred – antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all that divides or dehumanises.

Yet we affirm there can be no peace without justice, and no future built on the rubble of military power or the forced erasure of a people. To remain silent about the disproportionate suffering and long-standing oppression faced by Palestinians would be to deny the truth of what we see, and can never give us a just peace. Lasting peace can only be found through the dismantling of occupation, self-determination, and the restoration of dignity and security to every person in the Holy Land.

To leaders in the newly elected Australian Government, we repeat our calls to:

- Demand an immediate ceasefire and the uninhibited flow of humanitarian aid;
- Condemn the brutalities and atrocities which are being committed;
- End any remaining weapons exports to Israel and provide greater transparency over Australia's weapon exports;
- Call for the release of all hostages in both Palestine and Israel, and all Palestinians held without charge or trial;
- Impose targeted sanctions on Israeli settlers responsible for serious human rights abuses against Palestinians;
- Support the International Court of Justice in its measures to prevent genocide;
- Do all it can to facilitate a meaningful and lasting peace.

To the beloved Uniting Church community: I know we hold diverse views on many issues. These words do not claim to represent each one, but arise from our long-held desire for justice, human dignity and human rights. We believe this is a moment not for cautious neutrality but moral courage. We follow the crucified and risen Christ, who stands with the oppressed, weeps with the broken and rises with wounds still visible.

So let us lament. Let us pray. Let us lift our voices in advocacy. Let us educate ourselves and one another. Let us write to our leaders and join our voices with all who cry for justice. I encourage you to use the provided litany of lament for Gaza in your worship, as we name what must be named and cry out for peace.

Let us be the Church God calls us to be – courageous and faithful in love and solidarity, so that all may know the peace, shalom, salaam of God.

Rev Charissa Suli

President, Uniting Church in Australia

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