



# Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

## FAQ ON THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE IN JUNE 2025

**[Read here about the ASC adoption of the WCC statement.](#)**

**[Read here the WCC statement.](#)**

### **1. Why has the Uniting Church Assembly adopted this WCC statement now?**

The violence and humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, has reached unprecedented crisis levels. The WCC statement reflects two years of consultation with churches in the Middle East, including Palestinian Christians, and offers a clear moral witness grounded in the Gospel and international law. Standing with the global church, and as a member church of the World Council of Churches, it is timely and faithful to adopt this statement to guide our Church's public witness.

### **2. Does this mean the Uniting Church supports Palestine over Israel?**

The Uniting Church believes in the right of both Palestine and Israel to live with dignity and security, with peace grounded in justice. Our decision to adopt the WCC statement reflects the reality that peace is not possible while an unlawful occupation continues and Palestinians suffer daily violations of their rights. This is not about choosing one people over another, but about naming and confronting the injustices that are a barrier to peace for all.

### **3. Why does the statement use terms like “apartheid” and “occupation”?**

These terms are used because they reflect the assessment of respected international bodies, human rights organisations and the lived experience of Palestinians. ‘Occupation’ is the term used in international law to describe Israel’s military control over Palestinian territories. ‘Apartheid’ describes a system of institutionalised discrimination where one group maintains domination over another. Using these terms is not intended to inflame, but to name realities identified by international law and human rights consensus.

### **4. Does the Uniting Church reject Israel’s right to exist?**

The Uniting Church has long affirmed Israel’s right to exist in peace and security, going back to a key resolution of the Uniting Church Assembly, *Jews and Judaism* (2009). Legitimate criticism of the policies and actions of the Israeli Government and military is not a denial of Israel’s right to exist. As a member of the United Nations, Israel has rights and responsibilities within the international community. We also affirm that the

rights of Palestinians to freedom, justice, return to their land, and self-determination are inalienable human rights, and essential to any viable two-state solution.

### **5. Is this antisemitic?**

No. The statement explicitly rejects antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, and all forms of hatred. For decades we have formally stated our rejection of all forms of antisemitism as an affront to the Gospel. The statement draws a clear distinction between Jewish people and the policies of the Israeli Government, in line with the ruling of the Federal Court of Australia that legitimate criticism of the state of Israel is not antisemitic or unlawful. The Uniting Church values its relationships with Jewish communities in Australia and stands against any prejudice or discrimination.

### **6. Why doesn't the statement condemn Hamas or other Palestinian groups?**

The WCC statement focuses on the structural and ongoing injustices that underpin the current crisis, that is, the decades-long occupation and blockade of Palestine. The Uniting Church has previously condemned violence against civilians by Hamas and the horrific attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023. We have regularly called for the release of Israeli hostages. Those positions remain unchanged. This statement responds to the current humanitarian catastrophe and the occupation of Palestine, which is overwhelmingly the result of state actions by Israel, and preventing peace for all.

### **7. Why does the statement raise “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity” before they are legally proven?**

These terms are used because respected international bodies, including the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), are investigating credible allegations of such crimes. Naming these concerns is consistent with international human rights advocacy and a way of speaking truth about the seriousness of the suffering being experienced in Palestine. The Uniting Church believes the international community must act to end the violence and protect civilians now without waiting for necessary but lengthy legal processes to be completed.

### **8. Why is the Uniting Church calling for sanctions?**

The statement calls for accountability where international law is violated, including sanctions on individuals and entities responsible. This is a targeted approach, consistent with international practice, which seeks to address and curb serious human rights abuses. In the past, Australia has imposed sanctions under its own laws, as well as implementing sanctions of the UN Security Council, including upon Myanmar, North Korea (DPRK), Russia/Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Iran, Libya and Syria.

### **9. Does this mean the Uniting Church supports the global BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement?**

The Uniting Church has not formally endorsed the global BDS movement. The call for sanctions in the statement refers to specific, targeted measures to hold perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable, in line with international law.

## **10. How does this reflect the Uniting Church's theology and mission?**

We believe that following Jesus means standing alongside the oppressed, confronting systems of violence, and working for peace grounded in justice. We believe we are called to love our neighbour, to seek justice, and to walk humbly with God. Our commitments are also grounded in our theological vision that in Christ, who is our peace, we have the hope of 'all things reconciled' and that the brokenness and division between us can be healed.

## **11. What if I disagree with the Assembly's decision?**

The Uniting Church is a diverse community and we know there will be a range of views. We encourage respectful dialogue, deep listening, and prayerful engagement with the statement. Resources will continue to be made available to help communities explore the issues from theological, pastoral and justice perspectives.

If you would like to offer feedback on this position of the Uniting Church, contact [enquiries@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:enquiries@nat.uca.org.au).

[Visit the Assembly's central resource hub on Palestine and Israel for all resources, statements and resolutions.](#)