



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY: 67TH PLENARY MEETING (SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST)

20 May 2021

Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

Australia wholeheartedly welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire. This must be the start of a process towards a genuine, just, durable and resilient peace.

We commend the diplomatic efforts of all parties who have sought to bring an end to the conflict, including Egypt and the United States.

As the Australian Government has made clear, violence is no solution. Throughout the conflict, we have unequivocally called on all leaders to take immediate steps to stop the violence, to exercise restraint, and to move without delay to a sustainable peace.

Australia condemns the indiscriminate use of rockets, incendiary balloons, and other methods of attack by Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza.

Attacks on civilians are utterly reprehensible and must be resolutely condemned by the international community. The protection of civilians must remain paramount.

Using civilian population centres as shields from which attacks are launched is contrary to all international norms. The reckless disregard for civilian lives that Hamas has shown towards the people of Gaza and Israel must end. Civilians have already paid a heavy price for the actions of Hamas and its ruthless commitment to violence.

The State of Israel unquestionably has the right to defend itself in accordance with international law. Israelis have the right to live in peace. In defending itself and its people, the principles of proportionality and the protection of humanitarian actors must be upheld.

Equally, Palestinians must be allowed to live in peace and dignity.

Australia is gravely concerned by the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We call on all sides to ensure that help reaches the people who need it. Civilians should not bear the compounded cost of pandemic and conflict.

Australia calls on all parties to take steps to avoid this situation becoming a humanitarian crisis made exponentially worse by security concerns.

The safety and security of humanitarian workers and their assets are paramount, and they must be protected from targeting. We applaud the

work being done by humanitarian agencies inside Gaza to alleviate civilian suffering. It is imperative that this continues.

Australia calls on all parties to ensure that journalists and independent media organisations are protected. The world benefits from their work.

Holy sites are for peaceful worship. They must never be places of fear, chaos or violence. The world depends on the people and authorities in Jerusalem to preserve the sanctity of these treasured places. Australia urges all sides to respect the traditions and rights of freedom of religious belief and expression, and to allow unhindered peaceful access to people of all faiths to the holy sites in Jerusalem.

Peace is the only solution to this conflict.

The focus of all parties must be on a return to direct and genuine negotiations as soon as possible, with a view to defining a just, durable and resilient peace agreement.

To support this objective, we urge all parties to refrain from violent or provocative acts, or actions that increase tensions.

This includes all acts of violence, terrorism, riotous assembly and anarchy, as well as land appropriations, forced evictions, demolitions and settlement activity.

Australia remains a steadfast supporter of a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, where Israel and a future

Palestinian state exist in peace and security within internationally recognised borders.

This generational conflict must be brought to a decisive close.

All children in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank deserve better than to assume a future dominated by the tragedy of fear, violence, and perpetual conflict. The cycle of bloodshed serves no fit and proper purpose and must end.

Australia unreservedly adds its voice to the international community's calls for peace.

Thank you.