

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister of Australia  
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The Hon Senator Penny Wong  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
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Dear Prime Minister & Foreign Minister

I write on behalf of Australian Quakers who have had a longstanding concern about peace in Israel/Palestine. The Quaker community in Ramallah is part of our global network of Quakers, and is deeply involved in seeking paths for peace and justice for all those in the region. They seek our support in advocating for the needs of Palestinians under occupation.

For too long official Australian government policy has undermined Palestinian rights in Australia's engagement with the UN and international bodies; in aid and development funding to Palestine; in undermining a strong stance against Israeli settlements and ignoring international law about the status of Jerusalem.

We are pleased that the new Labor Government has already reversed so many of these regressive steps, and we look forward to celebrating with you Australia's recognition of Palestine. We note the important shifts in Australia's voting at the United Nations, particularly affirming that settlements are inherently illegal; and affirming Palestinian rights to self-determination and refugee rights.

We thank the Government for its ongoing support of the International Criminal Court, and for not mirroring the former Government's obstructionist approach to the Court investigating crimes, by any actors, in Palestine. We hope that this Government might also support the proposal for the ICJ to give an advisory opinion on the illegality of Israel's occupation.

We recognise with gratitude Australia's increase in aid commitment to Palestine – in restoring Australia's commitment to UNRWA to \$20million a year and allocating an additional \$2.9million in bilateral funding to Palestine in this

year's budget. This will assist in dealing with the current humanitarian tragedy that is caused by Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza. We look forward to the reinstatement of a significant NGO partnership program, and note that the humanitarian needs in Gaza are particularly acute.

We are grateful for the reversal of the former Government's decision about the status of Jerusalem. While criticism at the time of your announcement might have been particularly loud, you can be assured that the news was received with deep gratitude by so many, including our members. As you know, Jerusalem is a sacred place to many, and Israel's claim to exclusive sovereignty is deeply concerning. Your Government acknowledging that the status of Jerusalem is not at all resolved important to us.

In the lead up to the 2022 election, we joined with others in celebrating Labor's policy to recognise Palestine. We believe this will be a significant step to Australia's policy in holding the rights of Palestinians as equal to those of Israelis and would be a marker of a balanced foreign policy. It would also be additional evidence that Australia's support of a rules-based order is universal, in that we recognise the rights of all people to self-determination.

Yours sincerely

Presiding Clerk