



Visit to Australia by the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu: A Christian Response

In the next few weeks, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will pay an official visit to Australia at the invitation of the Australian government. The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network (PIEN), an association of hundreds of Christians across all major denominations is opposed to this official visit, for four reasons:

1. Under the leadership of Mr Netanyahu, the Israeli government has expanded illegal settlements, confiscated Palestinian land and undertaken repression and systemic violence against men, women and children. In his public comments and his government policies, Mr Netanyahu displays little interest in a just and peaceful outcome for all inhabitants of the Holy Land.
2. The Australian Government's invitation displays wilful disregard for the role of the State of Israel in the conflict in the Holy Land. In this invitation, the Australian government sets itself against the United Nations and the international community's recognition that Israel's occupation of Palestine violates international law and is *the* major obstacle to peace.
3. Our brothers and sisters tell us they need the global Body of Christ to support the Palestinian church's cries for peace. In the 2009 Kairos Declaration, Palestinian church leaders wrote, "We Palestinian Christians declare that the military occupation of our land is a sin against God and humanity". They have called for our help in bringing their situation to public scrutiny and prayerful solidarity (See www.kairospalestine.ps).
4. Many church leaders support the call for the Church to be active. Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "My voice will always be raised in support of Christian-Jewish ties and against the anti-Semitism that all sensible people fear and detest..."

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"But this cannot be an excuse for doing nothing and for standing aside as successive Israeli governments colonise the West Bank and advance racist laws." Also raising their voice are many Jewish organisations, including the Australian Jewish Democratic Society, Jewish Voices for Peace, and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.

What you can do!

We urge all Australian churches to engage with this issue and raise their voices in support of our Palestinian sisters and brothers, the Living Stones of the Holy Land. Here is what you can do:

- Pray for a lasting and just peace in Palestine and Israel and invite others to join you. Pray especially for those in both Palestine and Israel who work for peace and for justice.
- Raise this issue in your church. Ask for public prayers for peace and support for justice in Palestine. Distribute information to raise awareness.
- Contact your MP, write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and tell them you disagree with Australia's biased approach, which is not a way to peace. Write to your local newspaper and use social media to state your concerns.
- Join the public events organised against this official visit. See www.pien.org.au
- Act in solidarity with our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers. Visit them if you can, write letters of support and contribute financially to organisations working for justice and peace.
- Join a group advocating for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

PIEN can provide more information. Please visit our website www.pien.org.au or contact@pien.org.au to link in with others on this important issue.

PIEN: Australian Christians who seek lasting Peace for the people of Palestine and Israel. We aim to equip and inform Australian churches, inspired by Christ's vision for universal reconciliation



**PALESTINE ISRAEL
ECUMENICAL NETWORK**