



# NSW Ecumenical Council Inc.

Rev'd Dr Ray Williamson OAM  
President

Very Rev'd Fr Dr Shenouda Mansour  
General Secretary

20 May 2021

**Member Churches:**

Anglican Church (NSW  
Dioceses)

Antiochian Orthodox  
Church

Armenian Apostolic  
Church

Assyrian Church of the  
East

Bruderhof Australia

Church of South India

Congregational  
Federation of NSW

Coptic Orthodox Church

Ethiopian Orthodox  
Tewahdo Church

Greek Orthodox Church

Indian Orthodox Church

Lutheran Church of  
Australia (NSW  
District)

Mar Thoma Church

Religious Society of  
Friends

Roman Catholic Church  
(Dioceses of Bathurst,  
Parramatta and  
Wagga Wagga)

Syrian Orthodox Church

The Salvation Army

Uniting Church  
(NSW/ACT Synod)

**Observer Church:**

Roman Catholic Church  
(Other Dioceses of the  
NSW/ACT Province)

Associated with the  
National Council of  
Churches in Australia  
(NCCA)

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600

Dear Senator Payne,

I write yet again strongly to urge your government to use all its diplomatic avenues to work for an end to the current violence in Israel / Palestine, and an end to the long-term brutal, oppressive injustice perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

If it were not Israel, there would have been international outcry and condemnation of the appalling events seen on the West Bank and in Gaza during the past week.

Western leaders are always ready to mouth the slogan, "Israel has a right to defend itself". But what rights do the Palestinian people have? Do they even have the right to live with basic human dignity? They are yet again the powerless, voiceless victims.

The current troubles have been precipitated by the threat of the unlawful and callous eviction of native Palestinians from the homes that have been legally owned by their families for generations in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan areas in East Jerusalem. While this is the reality of those two areas at the present time, they are a mere microcosm of what has happened all over the West Bank of Palestine for fifty years. The Israeli Government not only supports but actively encourages the removal of Palestinians from their homes and land for the illegal building of settlements for Jewish people from all over the world.

While the Palestinians are driven from their lands with no recourse to the law and no financial compensation, tax breaks and financial incentives are given to those who wish to live in the settlements. It is nothing less than ethnic cleansing, driving indigenous Palestinians from their homes and lands with the stated intention of creating a Jewish-only state.

This action has been condemned under international law, but nothing is ever done about it.

On the contrary, when Palestinians protest against this inhumane and unjust treatment, they are called 'terrorists'.

How long will this situation continue? Though they are now only a small minority, we in the churches hear the voices of Christian Palestinians crying out for justice. Will the Australian Government do anything to help?

Yours sincerely,

*Ray Williamson*

The Reverend Dr Ray Williamson OAM  
*President*

cc. Senator the Hon. Penny Wong, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

