

# **Submission by the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) to the Australian Foreign Policy White Paper**

28 February 17

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) is the premier public affairs organisation for the Australian Jewish community. As such, we take a strong interest in Australia's position in the world, and especially the Middle East.

We appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to be considered in the formulation of this White Paper.

We believe that, as a well-respected middle power, Australia has the capacity to provide international leadership on issues important to global welfare, well beyond our own region. We also note that events on the other side of the world have the potential to impact our own fortunes as never before.

The importance of the white paper, therefore, cannot be overstated.

AIJAC wishes to comment on some particular aspects of Australian foreign policy that we believe we can bring particular expertise to, or which are of particular interest to the Australian Jewish community.

We have divided our submission into the following topics:

- I. Combating terrorism;
- II. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
- III. Asia and the Pacific;
- IV. The United Nations; and
- V. Iran.

## **I. COMBATING TERRORISM**

Internationally inspired terrorism remains the principal current security threat to Australia. Australians have frequently been directly or indirectly affected by terrorism of the sort that sparked the Bali bombings, the various Jakarta hotel bombings and the Australian Embassy attack in Jakarta, the Lindt Café siege, numerous other successful and planned attacks within Australia, as well as 9/11, various attacks across Europe, the Mumbai attacks and many other incidents.

Successive governments have rightly recognised that confronting, containing, and minimising the risk of terrorism is a key goal of Australian foreign policy.

Terrorism retains the ability to cause severe damage to our way of life and economic well-being, despite its failure to live up to its potential in recent years. The great fear

of the post-9/11 years - a terrorist attack employing WMD - is still a real threat, and the risk is potentially increasing given the recent inroads being made by Islamist radicalism in Pakistan and by Iran's quest to gain nuclear weapons capabilities, as well as reports that ISIS has been employing chemical weapons captured from the Syrian regime and seeking to produce its own.

A WMD-based attack – or even another “conventional” terror attack on the scale of 9/11 - in the West would likely not only inflict devastating loss of life, but would also have significant negative and probably irreversible effects on the international economy - as free flows of people, goods and ideas became more restricted. Moreover, the political effects could also be important - leading possibly to significant curtailment of traditional democratic freedoms in some Western countries. In other words, such an attack, even if it occurred on the other side of the world, would likely have significant, even dramatic, effects on Australia and Australian national interests. Australia therefore has a strong interest in cooperating with other countries to prevent such an attack anywhere, as well as any other form of mass terrorism.

It should be very clear that almost all of the current external terrorist threat to Australia comes from a specific variety of terrorism - that associated with Islamist radicalism, especially of the kind promulgated by Islamic State, al-Qaeda and like-minded groups. While other forms of terrorism of course exist internationally and may in some cases be a threat to Australia, none is remotely comparable at the current time in terms of the level of threat posed.

While there is no reason to believe that there is anything inherent in either Islamic extremism or terrorist tactics which links the two, it is nonetheless the case, that as a matter of current empirical reality, the most serious international terrorist threats at the moment, including in and against Australia, come from individuals explicitly acting in the name of Islam and viewing themselves as in a state of total war with the West including Australia.

It is incorrect and dangerous, both in terms of language and policy, to treat the Islamist-inspired terrorism problem as purely one of law enforcement or discuss it purely in criminal justice terms. As noted, the perpetrators of this violence view themselves as being part of a movement at war with Australia and other Western countries. Moreover, they cannot, for the most part, be deterred from their crimes by threats of judicial punishment. Many are in fact happy to carry out suicide attacks in the course of this war with us - therefore jail or arrest, while effective in preventing them carrying out further crimes, generally has no deterrent value.

While law enforcement must certainly be part of the mix, the Islamist terrorist problem is properly understood as something much larger which law enforcement alone cannot solve. Firstly, it is international. Significant elements of most terrorist crimes occur overseas, beyond the reach of Australian law enforcement, and also often beyond the reach of any foreign law enforcement authorities.

Successful tactics to reduce and stop international terrorism would include efforts to root out state support for terrorist groups, destroy terrorist safe havens and to prevent such groups from obtaining, transferring and deploying funds, arms and expertise.

Aid and diplomacy would also play a part in facilitating good governance and economic development in places which otherwise might be more amenable to terrorist recruitment.

Domestically, the government must seek to prevent terrorist attacks, with good intelligence, police work, and border controls; find and help guide would-be radicals back to the mainstream; and attempt to prevent the alienation and radicalisation of individuals or groups in the first place. Carrying out these activities entails significant international components, both in terms of facilitating this work, and learning from international best practice how best to achieve these tasks within Australia.

In addition, since deterrence is ineffective in preventing most terrorist attacks, the most important means of securing Australia and Australians from attack must be the prevention of such attacks. This is primarily done through intelligence work, and perhaps the single most important sources of such intelligence are friendly governments, and captured members of terrorist groups, including those captured by other governments.

The above factors make counter-terrorism a foreign policy problem par excellence.

AIJAC recommends that the following should be elements of counter-terrorism strategy in Australian foreign policy:

1. The existence of Islamic State clearly magnifies the international Islamist terrorist threat to Australia. It is not only a direct planner of international terrorism, and a safe-haven where terrorists can be trained, but also an inspiration for terrorism, a source of information for preparing terrorist attacks, and a deliberate radicaliser of Australians vulnerable to its message – principally young Muslims. Australian national interest demands that Australian foreign policy must seek the curtailment and eventual elimination of Islamic state – something of course Australia must seek in cooperation with other like-minded states with greater ability to project power to the Middle East region.

2. Despite the above, Islamic State is not the world's only terrorist safe-haven. The existence of other such safe havens – including much of Afghanistan, Libya, Sinai, Somalia, as well as elsewhere should also be a key concern for Australian foreign policy.

3. Even more important than safe havens is the existence of state sponsors of terrorism. As repeated annual US State Department reports attest, and as then-US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper attested in Congressional testimony last February, Iran is clearly the world's "foremost state sponsor of terrorism... [which] continues to exert its influence in regional crises in the Middle East through the International Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF), its terrorist partner Lebanese Hezbollah, and proxy groups...Iran and Hezbollah remain a continuing terrorist threat to U.S. interests and partners worldwide."

Given Australia's clear national interests in countering international terrorism, all of Australia's relationships with Iran should be firmly coloured by an over-riding goal of convincing Iran to change its behaviour in terms of terror sponsorship - using

persuasion, deterrence, sanctions, carrots and sticks, and any other means at Australia's disposal. Obviously, any prospect of success in this regard will require close cooperation with other like-minded nations and international NGOs, but coordinating to end Iran's terror sponsorship should be a key goal of Australian foreign policy. (More on this in the section of this submission on Iran).

4. An obvious obstacle to effective international cooperation on counterterrorism has been the failure of the international community to come up with an agreed definition of terrorism.

It should be noted that while much fuss is often made about the difficulty of defining terrorism, and the truism is often invoked that "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," this is in fact not nearly as great a problem as is often alleged. The difficulty of defining terrorism in international treaties, especially at the UN, has actually little to do with any inherent problem with the term but rather with certain national political priorities intruding in the negotiations. Basically, some states are determined to insert definitional exceptions for certain activities which are clearly terrorist but which they approve of politically. However, at base, terrorism is no harder to define than any other terminology describing a crime which contains an element involving the intent of the perpetrator - such as "premeditated murder", or "conspiracy" or "extortion".

Canada's *Ottawa Citizen* put the actual situation well in an editorial from Sept. 18, 2004:

*Terrorism is a technical term. It describes a modus operandi, a tactic. We side with security professionals who define terrorism as the deliberate targeting of civilians in pursuit of a political goal. Those who bombed the nightclub in Bali were terrorists. Suicide bombers who strap explosives to their bodies and blow up people eating in a pizza parlour are terrorists.... There is a popular misconception that violence committed for a legitimate cause cannot be terrorism. That's incorrect. Sikhs may, or may not, have legitimate complaints against the Indian government, but the 1985 Air India bombing was a terrorist act, because it deliberately targeted civilians. Journalists betray neither a pro- nor anti-Sikh bias to report it as such.... Osama bin Laden would have us believe that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. Nonsense. If you deliberately target civilians in pursuit of a political goal, you are a terrorist.*

Australia should be pushing hard for an end to the politicisation of the efforts to define the term at the UN. If the UN deadlock cannot be broken, Australian should be seeking creative ways to create an internationally accepted definition of terrorism outside the UN framework, incorporating as many nations as possible that are prepared to sign up to a genuinely useful such definition.

5. A key focus of Australian relations with friendly nations and allies should be constant exchanges of intelligence and expertise on counter-terrorism, as well as seeking areas where counter-terrorism cooperation can be further developed. Australia already has a very good record in this regard, particularly in our own region. Nonetheless, there is evidence that this can still be advanced further.

To give an example in which AIJAC has particular expertise, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), together with the BESA Centre for strategic studies based in Israel, published a report titled [“The wattle and the olive: A new chapter in Australia and Israel working together”](#).

While this discussed many issues, it has some specific recommendations with regard to Australian-Israeli counter-terrorism and related issue-areas:

***‘Counterterrorism***

*There’s scope for both countries to share information on terrorist financing, countering violent extremism, foreign fighters, the connections between Middle East terrorism and violent Islamist extremism in Asia, and developments in security technologies.*

**Recommendation**

*Israeli and Australian agencies involved in counterterrorism should meet for information exchanges*

***Intelligence cooperation***

*Both states’ intelligence services can enhance their interests by sharing information, particularly in the area of counterterrorism.*

*Australia’s still undertaking military operations in the Middle East. Israel has strong capabilities for intelligence collection and assessments on key countries and issues in that region.*

*Australia has good information on Islamist extremist groups in Asia that Israel would find of interest.*

***Cybersecurity***

*Israel has world-class expertise in cybersecurity and is establishing a new national Cyber Security Authority. Both sides can work to build an enduring partnership to try to secure the cyber commons while protecting their own critical infrastructure.*

**Recommendation**

*Australia and Israel should convene a cyber dialogue to examine issues such as internet governance, cybercrime, cyber regulations, information sharing between government and business, capacity building and incentives for industry.*

***Social cohesion and countering violent extremism***

*One of the most interesting areas in which Australia and Israel can learn from one another is the way each manages its Islamic communities.*

*Australia, working with its Muslim communities, has now developed an extensive program on countering violent extremism. Israel has recently started a ‘youth at risk’ program. Both countries are interested in how to measure the effectiveness of such programs.*

**Recommendation**

*Both countries should share information on how to integrate countering violent extremism programs into existing initiatives in education, employment and social policy and on how such programs can contribute to a cohesive society.*

Another relevant issue-area mentioned in the report is Israel's extensive experience with resilience and disaster management, which Australia could also benefit from, with ASPI and BESA recommending:

*Australia's national emergency management authority and Israel's equivalent (under its Ministry of Defense) should exchange information on homeland disaster resilience and on humanitarian assistance and responses in overseas emergencies and disasters*

AIJAC suggests that all these recommendations should be implemented by the Australian government, and that Israel can be one key counter-terror partner for Australia. However, in addition, we suggest that the ASPI-BESA study offers a model for similar studies looking at ways Australia can improve its cooperation on counter-terrorism with other key allies. AIJAC recommends that similar reports on counter-terrorism opportunities with all of our key allies be commissioned by DFAT or other relevant Australian government policy forming bodies.

6. AIJAC believes a successful Australian counter-terrorism policy is dependent on both private and public clarity about the roots of the problem as it currently exists.

Australian foreign policy should recognise that the primary current international terrorist threat is rooted in an international ideological movement that appeals primarily to people who identify themselves as Muslims. Successful formulation of counter-terrorism policies, and the retention of political support for such policies require officials to speak carefully, but clearly and without euphemism about the nature of the problem.

As American analyst on terrorism and national security Joseph C Myers has put it, "Our enemy says he is fighting jihad warfare to extend the Islamic faith; the basis of that claim rests on his exegesis of Quranic and Islamic Law injunctions. Irrespective of whether we or other Muslims accept or deny the legitimacy of his claim, if that is his stated doctrine, then that is the doctrine we must study and comprehend. That is the doctrine that will provide the indicators and warnings of future threats, that is the basis of our threat model" (Joseph Myers, "Strategic Collapse in the War on Terror" *American Thinker*, May 4, 2008)

At the same time there are two major pitfalls Western officials and political leaders should seek to avoid, or at least minimise, in talking about terrorism, especially terrorism by ostensibly Muslim groups.

A. They should seek to minimise any perceptions by domestic and overseas Muslim communities that might increase their alienation - including especially any implication that Western leaders regard Muslims, per se, as inherently threatening, or that any conflict exists between Western states and Muslims collectively, or "the Muslim World."

B. They should avoid using terminology that would play into the worldview, and arguments of those who seek to radicalise other Muslims. For instance, the term “Jihad” or “Jihadis” is problematic in this respect, because both are terms with very positive connotations in the Muslim tradition.

However, as noted above, these imperatives cannot supersede nor take priority over the competing need to speak clearly about the ideological motivations behind the most significant terrorist threats faced by Australia.

AIJAC realises that Muslim communities in Australia, in particular, are understandably very concerned about the linking of their religion with terrorist groups and terrorist behaviour. And they are correct that it is undesirable to speak of ‘Islamic terrorism’ or ‘Muslim terrorists’. However, the preferred option many put forward - that there be absolutely no link mentioned between Islam as a religion and the terrorism carried out by a tiny number in its name – must not be adopted because it conceals a vital reality that must be discussed when debating options for meeting this terrorist threat.

More than this, the adoption of euphemism, such as talking only about “violent extremism” to avoid making such links, even when individuals commit terrorist acts explicitly in the supposed name of Islam, is often counter-productive – playing into the hands of populist and extremist groups that wish to blame all Muslims for terrorism and use the supposed “cover-up” of the announced motives of terrorists to recruit support.

In AIJAC’s view, the best description of the ideology inspiring the contemporary terrorist threat to Australia is “Islamism” - which is a complete ideology for reworking human society based in an extremist interpretation of elements of Islamic history and religious tradition. Terrorism in the name of this ideology would be “Islamist terrorism”, just as terrorism carried out to further the communist ideology would be “Communist terrorism” or terrorism in the name of Fascism would be “Fascist terrorism.” This should be the preferred word used by security officials, ministers, diplomats and other government representatives.

There is also a strong case for Australian government representatives to avoid dividing Muslims into “extremists” and “moderates” - divisions which are alien to traditional Muslim discourse. It creates the perception that non-Muslims are judging who is a ‘good’ Muslim, and who is not. Moreover, in the context of the Islamic religion, being called a “moderate” would be no compliment – it suggests one’s faith and commitment to it is inferior to those of the “extremists.” Thus, such language can actually strengthen the appeal of violent Islamists who claim to represent true Islam.

It is best to contrast the violent extremists with “Mainstream Muslims” or alternatively, “traditional Muslims”. This serves the purpose of helping marginalise the radicals without directly passing judgement on what constitutes “true Islam”. Moreover, it is also a reasonably accurate summary of the reality across many Islamic-majority societies, where a new and radical interpretation of Islamic sources is essentially in conflict with long-established traditions of Islam. As the late Middle East scholar Dr. Barry Rubin noted, “My view is that for centuries what I call conservative, traditional Islam dominated societies. It was politically quietist focusing

more on individual behaviour. Islamism is a definite break with that world view though, of course, it is rooted [in] basic Islamic teachings, beliefs, and writings.” (Barry Rubin, “Islam’s Civil War”, *The Rubin Report weblog*, July 28, 2009, <http://rubinreports.blogspot.com/2009/07/islams-civil-war.html>)

In short, in employing terminology about the current terrorist threat, it is very important to avoid validating or giving legitimacy to the world view of the terrorists - which sees a Christian (and Jewish) war on the all the world's Muslims. However, this cannot be done by avoiding all reference to the Islam-inspired ideology which drives the terrorists and their sponsors. Nor can it be done by treating the problem simply as one of criminal behaviour – ignoring the ideological wellsprings of the problem. Therefore, calling those responsible "violent Islamists", who turn Islam into an ideology like communism and fascism, while at the same time stressing strongly that we respect and welcome Islam, is probably the most accurate and politically effective terminology to use.

While we must avoid helping these individuals radicalise and recruit other Muslims, it is at least equally helpful to them and their agenda if we refuse to acknowledge the motivations for what they are doing and the extent of the Islamist extremist terrorist problem.

7. Finally, we appreciate that Australia designates as terrorist the military, or external, wings of Hamas and Hezbollah. However, we argue that this delineation is an artifice, and that the entirety of these groups should be proscribed. Hezbollah's deputy leader, Naim Qassem, told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2009, "We do not have a military wing and a political wing... The same leadership that directs the parliamentary and government work also leads jihad actions in the struggle against Israel."

The organisations each work as one whole entity, with the military aims being the first priority. Money raised, and donations received, for the social arms are funneled into military infrastructure. Social programs are used to ultimately recruit Lebanese Shi'ites and Gaza Palestinians into the terrorist arms. For example, young Gazans are recruited for “summer camps” where they are taught to kill Israelis. Australia would be making a clear, and laudable, statement against these groups by proscribing them as a whole.

## II. THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

### Overview

Australia’s relationship with Israel is by no means framed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Australia and Israel share many common interests and goals, and mutual benefit comes through trade, combined research and other cooperative projects between the two countries.

That said, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and non-recognition of Israel in the Arab and Muslim world, is in the interests of Israel foremost, but certainly Australia as well.

## **The current status quo and Israel's view of the impasse**

Following the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation and its subsequent addendums, the West Bank and Gaza were divided into three sectors: In the West Bank, Palestinians have full security and administrative control over Area A, where over 90 percent of Palestinians live; Palestinians have administrative control but share security control with Israel in Area B; and Israel has complete security and administrative control in Area C, where all the settlements and their connecting roads are, and which also contains key strategic areas such as the Jordan Valley.

The Oslo Accords were not meant to be an end in themselves, but an interim period where Israel and the Palestinians could build trust and negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement that addresses some of the most contentious issues, such as refugees, Jerusalem, water, borders and overall security.

Despite massive waves of Palestinian terrorism launched against Israeli civilians during the Oslo period, Israel remained committed to Oslo. In 2000, then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak met together with then-US President Bill Clinton and then-Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at Camp David in an attempt to reach a peace agreement. Arafat rebuffed Barak's offer and launched a violent uprising later that year.

Nevertheless, Israeli negotiators made a second attempt at peace with a more generous offer at the Egyptian resort of Taba in 2001. That offer, too, failed to be accepted by the Palestinian delegation.

Seven years later, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Mahmoud Abbas the most generous peace offer of Palestinian statehood yet, complete with a hand-drawn map of where he envisioned land swaps would take place, concessions on the Temple Mount and addressing of the refugee issue. Abbas cancelled a follow-up meeting and never replied with a counteroffer.

Since being elected in 2009, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has made many overtures towards peace with the Palestinians, including endorsing the two-state peace paradigm promoted by his predecessors, an unprecedented unilateral 10-month settlement construction freeze and the release of Palestinian prisoners with blood on their hands. Despite repeated cooperative Israeli efforts with the Obama Administration to try to restart talks, there has been little progress in the peace process in recent years.

In a press conference with US President Donald Trump in February 2017, Prime Minister Netanyahu cited Palestinian refusal to accept Israel as a Jewish state, as well as Palestinian refusal to grant Israel ultimate control of security over a Palestinian state as principal obstacles to a peace agreement.

## **Australian policy on Israeli-Palestinian issues**

While the lack of peace between Israel and the Palestinians ultimately has little impact on the maelstrom that surrounds it – in areas such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen and

elsewhere – there is little doubt that the dividend from an Israeli-Palestinian peace would extend to Australia.

As a middle power distanced from the conflict region, Australia has a relatively minor but significant role to play in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

Australia has supported US peacemaking efforts from the outside. Australian leaders have joined in US disappointment that Palestinian leaders have failed to respond constructively to three separate Israeli peace offers since 2000.

For example, In an interview in 2003, then-Prime Minister John Howard explicitly criticised Yasser Arafat for failing to “seal that deal” at Camp David in 2000 after then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had offered “90 percent of what they’d asked for”.

Australia continues to maintain policies have largely been helpful and constructive in bringing the two sides together.

Australia has helped Israel’s peace efforts by unwavering commitment to the principles of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which endorsed Israel’s “right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force” as well as the concept of Israel exchanging land for peace with its neighbours.

Furthermore, Australia consistently rejects the singling out and one-sided criticism of Israel in international forums, and usually votes accordingly in such bodies.

Australia encourages both Israel and the Palestinians to avoid taking unilateral moves that could have a negative effect on peacemaking.

On the Palestinian side, Australia contributes significant economic and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian Authority, both directly and indirectly, and monitors its disbursement, while urging Palestinians to educate their people for peace and reject violence and incitement against Israelis.

Australia draws a distinction in its relations between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza.

The Australian government has designated Hamas’ military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, as a terrorist organisation.

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council thanks the Australian Government for its continued support of the State of Israel and for maintaining an objective and facts-based view of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. In particular, we:

- Welcome the bi-partisan support Israel has enjoyed from successive Australian governments;
- Applaud the close ties between Australia and Israel;
- Welcome Foreign Minister Julie Bishop refusing to pre-judge the legality of Israeli settlements in the West Bank;

- Appreciate Opposition Leader Bill Shorten’s nuanced position on settlements, differentiating between construction within settlements that are on land that is likely to remain part of Israel in any peace deal and isolated settlements;
- Welcome Ms Bishop and PM Malcolm Turnbull’s criticism of the one-sided UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which undermines Resolution 242 by predetermining matters that, by signed agreements, must be resolved only through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians; and
- Applaud the Government’s recognition of Israel as hi-tech powerhouse and its decision to open the Tel Aviv landing pad.

Going forward, we hope Australia will maintain its objective support for a negotiated, two-state outcome between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Such an outcome should:

- Be the result of direct negotiations entered into in good faith and without preconditions;
- End the conflict, with the Palestinian Authority renouncing all further claims;
- Result in a viable, democratic, peaceful and demilitarised Palestinian state;
- Result in clear borders, and a negotiated solution for Jerusalem;
- See the PA recognise Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, and acknowledge Jewish history in Jerusalem;
- Include a solution for Palestinian refugees that does not impact on the demographic nature of Israel as a Jewish state;
- Ensure Israel’s security and cessation of all hostilities; and
- Result in the end of Israel’s isolation from the Arab world.

To this end, we hope the Australian Government will:

- Encourage the PA to enter into such negotiations as described above;
- Discourage the PA from pursuing unilateral actions against Israel in international bodies such as the UN and International Criminal Court;
- Condemn anti-Israel and antisemitic incitement from PA leaders, including in Palestinian media and in Palestinian schools;
- Condemn the PA’s support of terrorism, whether it be through paying salaries to terrorists and their families, naming public squares and sporting tournaments after terrorists or promoting terrorists within the PA as a reward for murder;
- Thoroughly monitor and vet all aid money destined for the Palestinian controlled areas to ensure it doesn’t end up in the hands of terror organizations or being used to incentivise terror by providing payments to convicted terrorists or their families ;
- Continue to condemn Hamas terror; and
- Follow suit should the US relocate its embassy to Jerusalem.

### **III. ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Asia and Australia’s immediate region have rightfully formed an increased area of focus for Australian foreign policy in recent times. This century has been dubbed the Asia-Pacific Century, and the focus of world events is increasingly centring on East and Southeast Asia. China’s population of 1.3 billion people now boasts the world’s second largest economy at \$USD 11.3 trillion, and this is followed by Japan at \$USD

4.73 trillion. Additionally, India's population of 1.2 billion now has the world's seventh largest economy at \$USD 2.25 trillion. Australia has the good fortune to be placed squarely in the midst of this exciting, ever more vibrant and dynamic region, and the growth of Asia provides new economic opportunities for Australia to capitalise on regional prosperity, as well as political opportunities to enhance regional cooperation.

Given the strength of Australia's regional position and its relationships with countries in the region, Australia can also play a unique role as a bridge between Asia and its other international partners. In this regard, Australia should recognise the tremendous potential of its neighbours, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, in fostering international stability. As a democratic country, Indonesia provides a strong example for other Muslim countries. Australia's unique relationship with Indonesia provides Australia with a distinct opportunity to foster Indonesia's role in playing an active part within the Muslim world and the Middle East. For example, Indonesia has previously established capacity building projects in the Palestinian Territories aimed at promoting good governance. Supporting an active role for Indonesia would enhance Australia's security and help reduce the threat of terrorism. Additionally, this would give Australia a comparative advantage in promoting international stability that other Australian allies may not have.

Australia should also continue to use its regional position to promote good governance and multilateral counterterrorism frameworks at the regional level. Here, Australia can build on past achievements such as the Bali Process and the recently reaffirmed Lombok Treaty.

At the economic level, opportunity exists for Australia to develop economic synergies between Asia and Australia's international business partners. For example, the establishment of Australian Landing Pads in Shanghai, Singapore and Tel Aviv highlights the mutual interest in innovation between the countries and the potential for cooperation. Israel has much to offer the region, and is actively seeking to export its technology to Asia in agriculture, industry, energy, medicine, and information technology. Australia's support of this would provide economic benefits to Australia, enhance regional prosperity, and in turn, enhance regional stability.

Australia can also use these international relationships in its role in assisting its Pacific neighbours as they face serious threats from climate change. In this regard, Israel has previously operated out of its Canberra embassy to provide significant aid and development assistance to the Pacific, such as after Cyclone Winston in 2014. Here, there may also be opportunities for Australian aid providers to work together with Israeli aid providers for more effective disaster relief. Aside from disaster relief, Australia can also help facilitate the delivery of Israeli water and agricultural technologies which can help mitigate the effects of climate change. Australia's proximity to the Pacific gives it a unique advantage in delivering these technologies, and this would also provide Australian contractors with training and economic benefits.

#### **IV. THE UNITED NATIONS**

The United Nations' founding principles may espouse the highest ideals for human rights, but the organisation itself is only as good as its constituent members.

Unfortunately, the influence of Arab and Muslim governments in the Non-Aligned Movement - which enjoys an automatic majority at the United Nations - has seen the organisation corrupted and politicised on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The support enjoyed by the Palestinian national movement has ensured that the machinery of the UN has become malleable to its agenda.

These frivolous and repetitive anti-Israel resolutions are too easily passed in the General Assembly and sometimes the Security Council as well.

Partisan activists are appointed to the UN's associated agencies – UNESCO, UNWRA and the UNHRC et al – with the perverted mission of positioning Israel as the leading global human rights abuser.

AIJAC believes that the UN must be reformed to prevent the abuse of the systems and promote ideals that the organisation was intended to advance. Currently, far from contributing to Middle East peace the UN is, in fact, exacerbating the problem in various ways – through its one-sided resolutions that encourage Palestinian intransigence; through the entrenched and wildly disproportionate UN bureaucracy dedicated solely to the Palestinians, which similarly encourages intransigence; and through the various agencies which encourage the Palestinians to use the international system to press their grievances, rather than make any serious effort to achieve peace and, in the case of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) perpetuates the refugee problem.

As US member of the House of Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the chairwoman of the subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, said in testifying at a joint subcommittee hearing entitled, “Israel, the Palestinians, and the United Nations: Challenges for the New Administration,”

*“I think many of us could agree that it makes sense to have a uniform definition of refugee, and that all refugees should be under the auspices of a single agency. We could all be in agreement that the body meant to promote and defend human rights worldwide should not be controlled by nations that have some of the worst human rights records. And it makes sense that the body tasked with ensuring the protection of cultural and historical heritage should not be used as a political tool to deny or erase the cultural and historical ties of a people to their homeland.*”

*“Too many continue to see the United Nations for what it is supposed to be – not for what it is – unwilling to come to the hard realization that we need to take a drastic new approach if we are to salvage its mission. It has become a politicized tool used more to block action or maintain the status quo. And it has become the place where the world's dictators come together to demonize Israel, because it's easy.”*

## **UN Resolutions**

Every year the General Assembly rubber-stamps 20 resolutions that are markedly one-sided against Israel. This is more than the number of critical resolutions passed against every other country combined.

Overwhelmingly these resolutions disregard the actions of the Palestinians such as the incitement, encouragement and rewarding of violence against Israelis that are inimical to peace and the UN's own principles.

These resolutions also exclude the offers Israeli governments have made over many years to create a Palestinian state, institutionalising the false impression that Israel alone is the impediment to Palestinian statehood.

No other country is at the receiving end of this number of resolutions.

Australian governments have understood the absurdity of this.

When deciding which resolutions should be supported and which to oppose or abstain on, Australian governments over many decades have shown great leadership by voting based on principle and the merits of the resolution.

Despite Australia's excellent voting record on the General Assembly resolutions it could be even better.

For example, Australia's position on "[Jerusalem](#)" (A/RES/71/25) is to abstain. This position was adopted by the Rudd Government in 2007, where previously it had been to oppose during former Prime Minister John Howard's term of office.

AIJAC believes that Australia should revise its position on the resolution because the language has deteriorated since 2007.

Since November 2015, the Jerusalem resolution now includes a section "expressing its grave concern, in particular, about tensions, provocations and incitement regarding the holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al Sharif, and urging restraint and respect for the sanctity of the holy sites by all sides."

One of the main criticisms of the resolution is its adoption of only Islamic terms when referring to holy sites in Jerusalem. This includes the Temple Mount, known to Muslims as Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which is the holiest site in Judaism.

By not using inclusive terminology, the resolution formalises the totally false impression that Jerusalem's holy sites are uniquely important only to Muslims and that Muslim sensitivities and interests should take precedence over other faiths with equal or greater attachment.

At best, the resolution tries to make a false equivalence between Palestinian incitement to violence and acts of terror, particularly against civilians, and Israel's need to stop Palestinian terror.

Moreover, the resolution ignores the deliberate attempt by the Palestinian Authority to oppose a Jordanian-brokered solution to prevent violence on the Temple Mount by installing security cameras.

The resolution cannot be viewed in isolation. Its passage was preceded by similarly exclusionary resolutions on Jerusalem that were passed in UNESCO over the last two years.

The resolution is also problematic in creating a false narrative that Israeli governments have not offered to share the city of Jerusalem.

In fact in 2000, 2001 and 2008, Israel offered to create a Palestinian state that would share the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem and give the Palestinians sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif.

A second resolution that Australia should seriously consider changing how it votes on is “The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination” (A/RES/71/184).

In 2007, Australia changed its position from abstain to in favour.

AIJAC argues that the resolution deserves to be opposed.

For example, the resolution states:

*Recalling the conclusion of the Court, in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, that the construction of the wall by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, along with measures previously taken, severely impedes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.*

The resolution makes a mockery of the context in which Israel was forced to begin constructing its security barrier, when Palestinian terrorists from Palestinian self-rule areas on the West Bank were crossing into Israel to attack and kill Israelis.

Its construction was reluctantly authorised by then Israeli PM Ariel Sharon. Israel has always maintained that the security barrier is not a land grab but a temporary measure to protect lives.

The success of the barrier in reducing terror attacks speaks for itself, as Jewish Virtual Library [notes](#):

*During the 34 months from the beginning of the violence in September 2000 until the construction of the first continuous segment of the security fence at the end of July 2003, Samaria-based terrorists carried out 73 attacks in which 293 Israelis were killed and 1950 wounded. In the 11 months between the erection of the first segment at the beginning of August 2003 and the end of June 2004, only three attacks were successful, and all three occurred in the first half of 2003.*

*Since construction of the fence began, the number of attacks has declined by more than 90%. The number of Israelis murdered and wounded has decreased by more than 70% and 85%, respectively, after erection of the fence.*

*Even the Palestinian terrorists have admitted the fence is a deterrent. On November 11, 2006, [Islamic Jihad](#) leader Abdallah Ramadan Shalah said on [Al-Manar TV](#) the terrorist organisations had every intention of continuing [suicide bombing](#) attacks, but that their timing and the possibility of implementing them from the [West Bank](#) depended on other factors. “For example,” he said, “there is the separation fence, which is an obstacle to the resistance, and if it were not there the situation would be entirely different.”*

*The value of the fence in saving lives is evident from the data: In 2002, the year before construction started, 457 Israelis were murdered; in 2009, 8 Israelis were killed.*

A further reason to oppose the resolution is its failure to take into account history. The resolution insists on:

*the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, based on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,*

*Stressing also the need for respect for and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,*

When the Rudd Government changed its vote to “in favour” in November 2007, Israel’s Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was already deep in negotiations with the Palestinian Authority to end the conflict.

Ultimately, Olmert’s offer to the Palestinian Authority was a state that would include land to the equivalent of 100 per cent of the West Bank, all of Gaza, a share of east Jerusalem, a corridor connecting the West Bank and Gaza and a formula addressing the issue of refugees.

In other words, the offer met the criteria outlined in this resolution.

It was the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas who [ended](#) the negotiations with a [flurry of implausible excuses](#) as to why he could find no time to meet with Olmert.

In November 2015, Abbas admitted in a TV interview that it was he who [rejected](#) Olmert’s offer of a state.

AIJAC also proposes that Australia amend its position of “abstain” to “against” on the following resolution:

*Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories*  
[\(A/RES/71/96\)](#)

AIJAC disputes the resolution's statement that "the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, is applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967;

"Demands that Israel accept the de jure applicability of the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and that it comply scrupulously with the provisions of the Convention"

We argue that the Geneva Convention does not apply to the West Bank and Gaza because, when they territories fell under Israeli control during a defensive war, they were not under the recognised sovereignty of any state signatory of the Convention, as the terms of the Convention require.

Despite having no legal obligation to do so in this instance, Israel says it voluntarily applies the aspects of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

It argues that it applies the existing laws that applied to the territories as of June 1967, which are a mixture of Ottoman, British and Jordanian statutes.

Israel's commitment to the rule of law is widely known.

As such, Palestinians have access to legal representation through the military court system that ensures their rights are protected.

Another resolution that AIJAC believes Australia should change its position from "abstain" to "oppose" is:

Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan ([A/RES/71/97](#))

The resolution focuses on Israeli settlements:

Affirming that the transfer by the occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies constitutes a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant provisions of customary law, including those codified in Additional Protocol to the four Geneva Conventions

Many respected legal experts [argue](#) that the Geneva Convention only applies to the forceful transfer of civilians and this is not the case with Israel's settlements.

There is also a strong legal case to be made that the internationally recognised right of Jews to settle in the territory that comprised the British Mandate of Palestine still applies.

### **The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)**

The United Nations has two agencies dedicated to caring for the world's refugee population. There is the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) which looks after all refugees except Palestinians, and there is UNRWA, which looks after the Palestinians. While the only people defined as refugees under UNHCR jurisdiction are those who actually fled, UNRWA, uniquely, defines as refugees those who fled Israel's War of Independence in 1948-9 and their descendants. This is how a maximum of 800,000 refugees who fled in 1948-9, few of whom would still be alive today, became a refugee population of an estimated 5.5 million or more today.

Furthermore, while the UNHCR works to settle refugees in new countries, UNRWA seemingly works to perpetuate the refugee status of those under its care, while promoting Palestinian rejectionism. Millions of these refugees live in surrounding Arab countries, where, apart from in Jordan, they are denied citizenship, even if born there, and often restricted to refugee camps, which in turn frequently became hotbeds of violence and terrorism. Even more bizarrely, hundreds of thousands live in refugee camps in areas that have been governed by the Palestinians themselves for over twenty years.

Generations of Palestinians in these camps are taught, either by or with the approval of UNRWA, that they will one day return to the homes of their ancestors in Israel. In the meantime, they are also recruited to terrorist organisations.

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to peace is that the Palestinians are unwilling to renounce the "right of return" of the refugees to Israel. No Israeli government would, or could, ever accept this, because the entry into Israel of in excess of 5 million hostile refugees would mean the end of the Jewish state. Yet the right of return has become such an article of faith for the refugees that no Palestinian leader will likely survive disavowing it.

The solution is for UNRWA to be defunded and ultimately disbanded, and for Palestinian refugees to be treated, and defined, the same way as all others, under the auspices of the UNHCR.

### **The UN's anti-Israel bureaucracy**

The UN is awash with examples of the Palestinians and Israel being treated completely differently to any other people. For example, the UN has two days of solidarity each year. One is International Human Solidarity Day. The other is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Israel is the only country that's the daily target of three UN bodies established and staffed solely for the purpose of advancing the Palestinian cause and bashing Israel - the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the

Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights in the UN's Department of Political Affairs.

This third body is especially worthy of mention, because the UN Department of Political Affairs has six other geographical divisions – two for Africa, one for the Americas, one for Europe, one for Asia and the Pacific and one for the Middle East and West Africa.

These UN bodies are well funded, and antithetical to the cause of peace, as they perpetuate the Palestinian sense of grievance, and assist the Palestinians with their strategy of demonising Israel as a means to pressure Israel to grant their state without the need to make any compromises.

Australia regularly votes against the funding for these bodies, but we could, perhaps do more to campaign among other countries to do so as well, as it is only abstentions by many democracies that allow these budget items to pass each year.

### **Other UN Bodies**

Many other bodies in the UN also contribute to this destructive demonization of Israel. Perhaps the most notorious is the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Israel is the only country that has a permanent agenda item at the UNHRC. Between June 2006, when it was established, and July 2014, of 103 resolutions passed by the UNHRC, 56 criticised Israel. The UNHRC also launches committees of inquiry into Israeli actions, such as its wars with Hamas, where Israel's guilt is virtually determined by the terms of reference, and committed anti-Israel activists front the inquiries or are put to work in powerful roles behind the scenes.

On March 24, 2016, the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) wrapped up its annual meeting in New York by condemning only one country for violating women's rights anywhere on the planet – Israel, for violating the rights of Palestinian women.

In October 2016, UNESCO passed motions which effectively denied any Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, naming it only by its Muslim name and referring to as a “Muslim holy site of worship.”

These are but a few examples, and this pattern is not just damaging to the peace process and to Israel, but to the UN and the international community as a whole.

The UN could and should be a body that does a great deal of good. It should call out genuine human rights abusers, and should have the moral standing to command the respect of all right-thinking people. Instead, genuine human rights abusers rarely get a mention, while Israel is constantly pilloried – a farcical situation that means the UN can't be taken seriously, neither by those who should utilise it nor those who should fear it.

Australia should consider defunding these bodies, either partially or completely, and convince other countries to do the same, until they perform the functions they were established to do.

## V. IRAN

The regime in Iran remains one of the world's worst human rights abusers, according to the United Nations and various human rights-centric non-government organisations. The actions and extreme ideologies of the regime pose a threat not just to its own citizens but to international security.

In Iran, women, homosexuals, Christians, those considered apostate, members of the Bah'ai religion, political dissidents, those opposed to the regime and others face continued persecution, with many, under threat of torture or death, fleeing Iran for countries including Australia.

While some of Iran's actions, such as its illegal ballistic missile tests and extremist, violent rhetoric directed at Australia's allies including the United States and Israel have been subject to significant international attention, Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the Middle East and role as the world's number one state sponsor of terror have to a great extent gone unchecked and un-counteracted.

The Iranian regime has openly, and covertly, supported extremist elements in countries such as Yemen and Syria, leading to gravely concerning political instability, in an effort to ensure that elements sympathetic to their ends maintain a presence throughout the troubled region. This has included sponsorship of militant groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, whose armed wings remain on the Australian Government's designated list of terror organisations. Iran's support of these groups has furthered their ability to act with impunity as well as target non-combatants and those opposed to their political ideologies.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear deal), far from inhibiting the regime's extremist actions, has not curbed its continued hegemonic ambitions and actions throughout the Middle East, nor created a permanent solution to curbing Iran's nuclear program which, without adequate checks and balances can both be continued clandestinely and openly beyond the conclusion of the deal's temporary scope.

As a foreign policy priority, Australia should work to ensure the following:

- **Iran complies stringently with all the conditions of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear deal) and co-operates with all international agencies seeking to monitor Iran's nuclear activity and ensure compliance with the deal:** International agencies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), require unfettered access to Iran's reactors and sites of suspected nuclear development activity to ensure the enforcement of the deal. Any attempt to evade or not comply with aspects of the deal or restrict access to its monitors can justly be interpreted as a breach of the agreement.
- **The Federal Government supports the re-implementation of sanctions against Iran should the regime not comply with the deal:** Should Iran

breach the agreement or refuse to comply with its stipulations, including crucial inspections related to the deal's enforcement, it is a necessary condition of the agreement that sanctions be reimplemented and crucial to the long-term stability of the region and continued curtailment of Iran's nuclear activities that they be reimplemented in full.

Given the regime's violent rhetoric towards democratic nations and flagrant human rights abuses, it is necessary to treat with requisite caution any attempt to open or further trade or diplomatic relations with Iran.

There remains a concern that once Iran is found to be in breach of the agreement that a 'snap-back' of sanctions, given many countries' stated desire to further engage in business or trade with Iran, would be increasingly difficult. It is of paramount importance not only that Iran understand that a breach of the deal will be met with a full reimplementation of sanctions but that countries seeking to further engage with Iran do so conscious that Iran is party to an agreement to which it is yet to demonstrate full commitment.

- **Iran immediately ceases ballistic missile tests, the latest of which was conducted as recently as February 2017, and other like actions that endanger international security:** Iran's continued ballistic missile tests, not addressed by the nuclear deal, have demonstrably exacerbated tensions in the region and between Iran and Australia's ally, the United States. Meant as a provocation and widely understood to entail a threat of potential future force, an already troubled region will only suffer an increase in tension and uncertainty if Iran continues to take such steps.
- **That Iran, recognised worldwide as a state sponsor of terror, refrain from providing financial or any other kind of support to militant groups such as Hezbollah's armed forces in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza:** In past conflicts, Hamas has been shown to indiscriminately target civilians in Israel and persecute those in Gaza who are not supportive of Hamas or aligned with its radical political ideology. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has stated that it is amassing rockets for a future campaign against Israel, and has actively contributed to hostilities in Syria. Any action to sponsor or support these anti-Western, extremist and violent outfits needs to be curtailed and condemned.
- **Iran ceases its rhetoric and threats towards the State of Israel:** Australia should discourage, denounce and consider imposing consequences on Iran for statements by the Iranian leadership which threaten to "wipe Israel off the map" or other incitement to violence towards Israel by Iran.

Iran's disturbing rhetoric towards Israel has belligerently continued, in spite of the advent of the Iranian nuclear deal and leadership change within the regime, which has infamously supported Holocaust denial cartoon competitions and has not desisted over decades in its threats towards Israel, an ally of Australia. With Iran's continued incitements to violence an ongoing threat to regional

stability, its actions in this regard cannot be dismissed nor downplayed, and are deserving of international condemnation and due consequences.

## **CONCLUSION**

AIJAC wishes to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to this review of Australia's foreign policy. We would be more than happy to contribute further by answering any questions or giving further clarification of any of the points raised in our submission.

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