About Us

April 12, 2009

Australians for Palestine

http://australiansforpalestine.com/about-us

“.. we need to tell the truth and remind the world of the full historical picture, hold on to the lawful right of resistance and mobilize people everywhere”

Edward Said

THE TEAM

*Australians for Palestine* has an executive committee and a team of two people on call to provide information and advice on Palestine.
Sonja Karkar manages the day-to-day affairs and is editor of the AFP website and Samah Sabawi is AFP’s expert analyst on all Palestine matters particularly, and the ME region in general.  Their experience and skills are listed below.
*(Click on each bio to read)*

Australians for Palestine also has a team of professional volunteers and advisers to help with special projects and events.

**Mission Statement**

Australians for Palestine seeks to dispel the myths and disinformation about Palestine in Australia by actively engaging with the media, academic institutions, Federal and State Parliaments, governmental bodies, NGOs, and the community at large. It seeks to communicate the Palestinian narrative from a historical perspective, as well as through the current political developments impacting on Palestinians wherever they are, the Middle East region, and the world at large. Australians for Palestine is committed to using media production and distribution and public relations as a tool for promoting Palestinian social justice issues in Australia. It is our goal to give voice to those issues falsely and/or not represented in the mainstream media or by our parliamentary representatives. Hence, its mission is to generate true and constructive alternatives to the current biases that have been allowed to dominate in Australian society.

**To that end, its aims and objectives are:**

* To engage with the media to raise public awareness about the violation of basic rights, problems and difficulties faced by Palestinians everywhere.
* To engage with members of Federal and State parliaments so that they will become more familiar with their Palestinian constituencies by providing them with regular briefing papers on Palestinian issues.
* To make its resources and services available to journalists, politicians, business interests, academics and the general public in order to promote Palestinian objectives.
* To bring out internationally renowned speakers as a way of capturing the interest of the public on matters of particular interest with regard to Palestine.
* To develop a public education strategy that will present the Palestinian perspective to schools and tertiary institutions through public lectures, educational packages and tours to Palestine.
* To create a dynamic website that will be a reliable and constantly updated source of news and analyses on Palestinian issues and other information that is linked with Palestine.
* To develop a strong and vibrant global network of contacts via the internet in order to promote unity of endeavour and action amongst Palestinians in the Diaspora and intensify the bonds of Palestinians with Palestine so as to energise the creative force of Palestinian life.
* To publish newsletters, pamphlets, periodicals and other literature and to use any other forms of publicity to carry out these aims and objectives or any of them.
* To administer any relief or other fund which may be received in trust or otherwise for any of these aims and objectives.
* To raise monies for any of these aims and objectives.
* To cooperate with any organization having aims or objectives similar to those of Australians for Palestine.

**Statement of Principles**

Australians for Palestine adopts the following principles:

**I. The position on a Palestinian State**

Australians for Palestine adopts the position that it is not within our purview to advocate for a one-state or two-state solution.  It is solely the prerogative of the Palestinian people to decide through their democratically elected Palestinian representatives how they wish to live.

**II.    The position on Jerusalem**

Australians for Palestine holds the position that East Jerusalem must remain an integral part of the West Bank.  However, all of Jerusalem remains the subject of final status negotiations because of its strategic importance in reconnecting the northern region of the West Bank to the southern region.  The most desirable outcome would be an open city where all people are free to move and worship.

**III.    The position on the right of return**

Australians for Palestine upholds the inalienable right of Palestinian refugees to return home. This right is enshrined in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1948.  No agreement, negotiations or parties which purport to trade away the right of return or any other inalienable rights can have any legal basis and cannot bind or compel the Palestinian people to accept them.  The right of return is as much an integral part of the Palestinians’ right of self-determination as it is of individual and collective human rights.

**IV.    The position on Israel’s right to exist**

Australians for Palestine adopts the position that Israel’s “right” to exist in peace and security as painfully acknowledged by Chairman Yasser Arafat in 1988 on 78 percent of  Palestinian land according to UN Resolutions 242, 338 and 194 is predicated on Israel accepting the right of the Palestinians to exist as a free people with equal rights for Israel’s Palestinian citizens and the right of Palestinian refugees to return home. Israel’s existence is not exclusive to, or more valid than, the right of Palestinians to exist. How they shall exist is the issue still to be resolved.

**V.    The position on Apartheid**

Australians for Palestine adopts the position that Israel is an apartheid state under the UN definition of complete separation.   Its policies are steeped in an exclusivist/supremacist ideology that separates people according to religion/ethnicity and discriminates against the Palestinians under an elaborate system of laws, the most glaring example of which is preventing Palestinians from purchasing land in the Occupied Territories and Israel.

**VI.    The position on the right to resist**

Australians for Palestine recognises the right of Palestinians to legitimately resist Israel’s oppressive occupation within the territories occupied in 1967. This is the right of all Palestinians living under Israel’s occupation and is linked to the historic rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination.  This right is permissible under the United Nations Charter’s Article 51, concerning self-defence and has historical precedents in the struggle of many people and nations to free themselves from colonial oppression and occupation.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states quite clearly: “It is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected under the rule of law.”  By failing to protect Palestinian human rights, the international community has driven the Palestinians to resist their occupiers and oppressors.

**VII.    The position on terrorism**

Australians for Palestine adopts the position that terrorism violates the right to life, and therefore, is contrary to the fundamental principles of humanity embodied in international humanitarian law. This applies equally to the oppressor and the oppressed.

**VIII.    The position on peace negotiations**

Australians for Palestine believes that the major obstacle to peace is Israel’s occupation of Palestine, its denial of equal rights to Palestinians inside Israel and its refusal to allow Palestinian refugees the right to return home.  This has been further complicated by Israel’s illegal settlement building, its proposed convergence plan in the West Bank to define its borders and its siege on Gaza.  What is required is the immediate cessation of the illegal settlement and wall building and the immediate cessation of Israel’s excessive, indiscriminate and unjustified use of force against the Palestinian people, a desire for peace and a commitment to work towards it on the part of both Israelis and Palestinians.  Further, the revival of any peace process will only succeed if there is an honest broker willing to  monitor both parties’ fulfilment of the necessary requirements for peace negotiations and one willing to uphold human rights, justice and international law.

**IX.    The position on boycotts, divestment and sanctions**

Australians for Palestine adopts the position that pressure must be put on Israel through boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) to end its occupation and colonisation of Palestinian lands and to dismantle the Apartheid Wall; to end its discrimination of Palestinian citizens inside Israel and allow them equal rights; and to acknowledge the right of the Palestinian refugees to return home as set out in UN resolution 194. The failure of diplomacy and dialogue, and an international community led by the United States unable and/or unwilling to confront Israel and demand that it respect international law and United Nations resolutions condemning its policies, leaves this as the only non-violent, effective option to bring about change.  Therefore, Australians for Palestine will appeal to our government to uphold international law and apply sanctions on Israel; appeal to institutions such as unions, churches, councils and universities to divest from corporations that do business with Israel; and, appeal to the general public to boycott products and services that benefit Israel.

**Australians for Palestine BDS guidelines**

 Australians for Palestine fully endorses Palestinian Civil Society’s call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights.  It joins the global movement against Israeli Apartheid and will concentrate its efforts on developing material and providing information about the BDS call and how it can be implemented.

 To that end, we aim to:

* Provide up-to-date **briefing papers** on the situation in Israel/Palestine and the Palestinian non-violent struggle that aims to end Israel’s occupation and oppression.
* Develop and produce **multi-media presentations** that explain what the BDS call is about as well as raise awareness about the human rights violations Palestinians face on a daily basis
* Provide **speakers with relevant expertise** on the issues to speak in various cities in Australia
* Invite and sponsor prominent **international speakers** to add their expertise to the debate
* Develop **manuals and pamphlets** that provide easy-to-read information on the issues underlying the Palestinian non-violent struggle
* Engage the Australian **media** and provide them with views and analyses of the issues as they develop
* Speak to **elected officials** and provide them with information and facts about the current situation

Australians for Palestine will, when possible and when our staff and volunteers are available, participate in protests and actions for boycotts, but only if these actions fit within our guidelines below.

Our view is that boycott actions should aim to raise awareness and build support at the grass roots level.  Every protest should have a positive impact and be designed to win the hearts and minds of consumers and to educate them that buying Israeli products supports a system of apartheid that violates Palestinian human rights.  Boycotting these products allows them to demonstrate their disapproval of Israel’s ongoing violation of Palestinian human rights.

**Actions aimed at disrupting businesses, aggravating customers or challenging police authority** are detrimental to our aims.

We are mindful that the initial call was for non-violent action as a tool to empower people around the world to stand on the side of justice and equality.

The BDS call does not target Jews, or even Israelis qua Jews; the call is strictly directed against Israel as a colonial and apartheid power that violates Palestinian rights and international law and, as such, is against all form of racism including anti-Semitism.

Every protest, therefore, should mirror the spirit of non-violent Palestinian resistance in a way that will **benefit the Palestinian** people and not sabotage them.

For more information on the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions call visit <http://www.bdsmovement.net/>

This information was written by Editor on April 12, 2009