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IMPROPER MOTION NEEDS PROPER ACTION

On 12 March 2008, our Prime Minister will be moving a motion in the Australian Parliament honouring Israel's 60 years of independence. The motion will be seconded by the Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson. A reception will then be held in the Mural Hall of Parliament House at which ministers, other members of Parliament and community leaders are likely to attend.

Such a motion, which honours a foreign country's independence while it is violating the rights of the indigenous people, occupying their land and breaching international law, is unprecedented in our Parliament's history. It completely ignores the now well-documented historical record of Israel's ethnic cleansing that began with the 1948 al-Nakba - the Palestinian catastrophe of dispossession and displacement - and which is continuing to this day. For sixty years, the Palestinians have been denied their rights, their freedom and their nationality while Israel continues to expropriate their lands on which to build illegal Jewish-only settlements in defiance of international law and all human rights conventions.

This is an improper motion that ought not to pass unchallenged, particularly in light of Israel's recent attacks on the civilian population in Gaza. Not only is it an affront to our nation's dignity and self-respect, it is most offensive to the Palestinian community in Australia. For this reason, numerous interest groups around Australia have come together to protest this bi-partisan motion by endorsing a statement prepared by Paul Heywood-Smith QC which will be published in *The Australian* on 12 March 2008.

We believe that as a signatory to the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which prohibits the punishment of protected persons, the Australian Government has an obligation to call for Israel's compliance and demand an end to the violence and siege. That is the proper motion we believe ought to be put before the Parliament. It would signal Australia's respect for the universal rights of all people.

Your signature, along with significant others, would give our message the authority it needs to alert Australians to the injustice of singling out Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. We would be most grateful for your participation and immediate response.

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