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P R E S S R E L E A S E

IMPROPER MOTION NEEDS PROPER ACTION

12 March 2008

Today, Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd will move a motion honouring Israel's independence. This independence comes at the expense of the indigenous Palestinians whose al-Nakba – the Palestinian catastrophe of dispossession and displacement – has been ongoing for more than 60 years.

Such a motion completely ignores the now well-documented historical record of Israel's ethnic cleansing and calls into question the sincerity of the Prime Minister's recent apology to our own indigenous people. The contradictions have not gone unnoticed.

Since 1948, 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. Giving preferential treatment to a foreign country embroiled in such criminal activities is unprecedented in our parliament's history.

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. The utter silence of the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) – to which Australia is a signatory – which specifically prohibits the collective punishment of a protected civilian population, should raise immediate concerns about the respect of the Parties – particularly our own Government – for the substance and the spirit of the Convention.

Not only is the Prime Minister's motion 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. It is completely contrary to the principles of the Australian "fair go" which have been so enthusiastically endorsed by the Prime Minister, and therefore, the motion should be absolutely rejected by all Australians.

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