

Don't mention the war as Israel lauded

by Alan Ramsey

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You might recall Labor's Julia Irwin and her efforts 51/2 years ago to debate Israel's theft of what used to be the Palestinians' half of Palestine. On September 26, 2002, Irwin gave formal notice that she wanted Parliament to debate Israel's continued military occupation, in defiance of the United Nations, of the West Bank and Gaza for 35 years. Despite thuggish efforts to shut Irwin up, the Howard government allowed her four-point motion to go ahead in the House of Representatives six weeks later but restricted debate to six MPs, each given only five minutes' speaking time.

As a "debate" of the core malignancy convulsing the Middle East ever since the UN partition of Palestine in 1948, it was a travesty. It was also one of those extremely rare occasions that the easily intimidated Australian Parliament, ever mindful of Jewish financial support of party coffers, has debated the Middle East at all.

Kevin Rudd, as busy as ever, apparently intends to change that. Two days ago, the Melbourne-based support group Women for Palestine circulated an email based on reports in The Australian Jewish News that Rudd proposes introducing next Wednesday a parliamentary motion, seconded by the Opposition's Brendan Nelson, "honouring Israel's 60 years of independence". Wrote the Women for Palestine's Sonja Karkar: "Such a motion is unprecedented in our Parliament's history. It completely ignores the record of Israel's ethnic cleansing that began with the 1948 Palestinian dispossession which is continuing to this day. For 60 years the Palestinians have been denied their rights, their

freedoms and their nationality while Israel continues to expropriate their land to build illegal Jewish-only settlements in defiance of international law and all human rights conventions."

Karkar's email spurred the Sydney-based media ginger group, the Australian Committee for Truth in the Middle East, to respond on the web: "Mere weeks after our Prime Minister made a long overdue and widely supported apology to our indigenous people, he is preparing to reverse his position on indigenous rights by making a public statement supporting Israel's treatment of the Palestinians ...

"Israel has lived the life of a spoiled brat for the past 60 years. Even more unfortunately, if Israel continues on its present path (and there is no indication of change) it will continue in this manner of throwing a tantrum whenever the international community indicates that a bit of adult, civilised behaviour would not go amiss. The current tantrum is the killing of 126 Palestinians in Gaza in response to the relative pinpricks of [homemade] Hamas rockets fired into territory illegally occupied by Israeli settlers ... "

Last week, after The Australian Jewish News first disclosed the proposed Rudd/Nelson parliamentary motion, the head of the so-called Palestinian Delegation in Canberra, Ali Kazak, who has spent years banging on the doors of our politicians in support of Palestinian rights, wrote: "The policy of appeasement. How low politicians can go. Is Kevin Rudd from now on going to deliver a parliamentary motion to congratulate every country on its national day? Why is Israel special? Is it because of the petty cash the ALP and the Liberals receive from Jewish businesses for their election campaigns?

"Australian politicians should not forget Australia has a moral and historic duty towards the Palestinian people [because of Australia's 1948] support of the establishment of Israel in Palestine on their blood, bones and tears. How far are politicians prepared to go in damaging Australia's international reputation and standing for the sake of Israel and some petty cash?"

The website of The Australian Jewish News shrilly reported the emails of the two pro-Palestinian lobbies as "groups hostile to

Israel are launching a media blitz to coincide" with next Wednesday's parliamentary motion.

It is, you'd have to think, a very wee media "blitz". A couple of emails, a proposed newspaper ad if Women for Palestine can raise the money, and a whack from Ali Kazak that has gone utterly unreported, until now.

So what is our Kevin doing?

His office says yes, Rudd does propose introducing a motion in Parliament concerning the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel (which is not actually due until May 14). And yes, he proposes doing this next Wednesday. But what it will say is still being worked on. And no, Brendan Nelson has not, as yet, been consulted, although he will be.

What might it say about the Palestinians?

Web Link

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/dont-mention-the-war-as-israel-lauded/2008/03/07/1204780063505.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>