Palestinians United for Justice and Peace

Australian Solidarity and Activism



By Reem Borrows



A wave of anguish, disbelief, and empathy has engulfed the Australian Palestinian and Middle Eastern communities before the unfathomable carnage that has been ongoing in Gaza for six months. These sentiments are shared by a majority of Australians, an estimated 80 percent of whom are calling for an immediate ceasefire. Amid the global outcry for justice in Palestine, this piece spotlights not only the ceaseless efforts of Australia's Palestinians but also the diverse groups of like-minded people who are standing up to voice support for the Palestinian cause. Through their inspiring activism and solidarity emerges a story of commitment to freedom and justice in Palestine.

Australia has experienced an unprecedented surge of activism by its Palestinian diaspora and a growing number of supporters. Fueled by their commitment to justice, volunteers and activists have intensified their activities, undeterred by potential risks to their careers or reputations. For them, the duty is clear to stand up for their homeland and their people during a very dark time when Israel is perpetrating atrocities and war crimes both in Gaza and the West Bank.

The once largely private displays of the Palestinian flag can now be seen across the Australian continent at rallies and vigils being held in ever-growing numbers. As someone born in Haifa and raised inside the 1948 territories, I'm profoundly moved by the fluttering of so many Palestinian flags.

Beyond symbolic gestures, the diaspora has been orchestrating diverse initiatives. In an expression of their commitment to the Palestinian plight, Muslim religious leaders have rejected the presence of politicians at iftars and are demanding an official government response to calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Middle Eastern churches have moved beyond prayers and have actively raised funds to support humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza. And on March 3, the National Zakat Foundation held a "Heart of Palestine" fundraising dinner in Sydney which alone raised AU$1 million.

In the absence of government support, local initiatives are filling the void to help Palestinians arriving in Australia from Gaza with their resettlement. Funds raised by organizations as well as individuals are going toward airfares and accommodation expenses for those Palestinians who are able to leave Gaza and are travelling to Australia from Egypt. Housing options, as well as medical treatment, driving lessons, English lessons, furniture, and clothing are all being organized for the new arrivals. Organizations such as Palestine Australia Relief and Action (PARA) and Palestinian Christians in Australia (PCiA) have ensured that displaced Palestinian children are enrolled in local schools and have called for the provision of university and college scholarships where needed.

The Palestine Action Group in Australia commits to weekly rallies nationwide, attracting tens of thousands of people, with Sydney rallies alone drawing 40,000–100,000 attendees each week. The Palestinian Action Group, Labour Friends of Palestine, and others have united to boost their impact, all delivering the clear message, "Not in Our Name." Organizations such as the Australian Palestinian Club Sydney,

In fortnightly vigils, Health Workers for Palestine call for an immediate ceasefire and a free Palestine.





The Palestinian Action Group (PAG) vows to have weekly rallies until there is a permanent ceasefire. They demand a free Palestine, one in which Palestinians can live in that region in peace, with equality, dignity, and rights.

Palestinian Arts, Culture and Sports Inc., and the Palestinian Community of Western Australia organize cultural and community-building activities to preserve our heritage. And the annual multicity Palestinian Film Festival, held from March 7–17 this year, drew unusually large crowds.

Civil society organizations, including Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine and the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid, which participate in the rallies are also helping mold public opinion and counter Zionist narratives. Many Australian Jews have condemned the atrocities being carried out by the Israeli army in both the West Bank and Gaza, and express their dissent by participating in the nationwide protests calling for a ceasefire and speaking up.

At this writing, successful young professionals have been camping outside our prime minister's electoral campaign office in Sydney around the clock, demanding substantial change in Australia's official policy. Their most important demands are for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the reinstatement of Australian funding to UNRWA, and the end of arms sales to Israel.

Hand in hand with supporters from all walks of life, Palestinians in Australia are working tirelessly to intensify their call for a free Palestine and to demand the right of return for all Palestinian refugees. This isn't just a plea; it's a strong demand for a future where justice and peace prevail in a free Palestine.

Reem Borrows, a Palestinian Australian from Haifa, is an author, speaker, leadership expert, and coach with 25+ years of experience. As the founder of Dreem Coaching and Consulting, she facilitates positive transformation for both individuals and companies using a heart-centered leadership framework. Recognized as Australia's Best Corporate Trainer 2020, Reem holds a bachelor of commerce and a post-graduate diploma in human resource management. Her recent book is titled From the River to the Sea, Humanizing Freedom *(Red Thread Publishing, 2023).*

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Tens of thousands of people turn up at Hyde Park Sydney every weekend.