Speech at Sydney demonstration against Netanyahu’s visit to Australia
by Julia Finn MP

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, the Gadigal people, their elders past and present. This was, is and always will be Aboriginal land, and Palestine was and always will be Palestinian land.

We are here today to send a strong message to Benjamin Netanyahu while he’s visiting Australia, and that message is we support peace and we support Palestine.

Netanyahu is an enemy of peace.

He opposed the Oslo accords from the outset, and so far this year, his Government has approved 6000 new homes in the existing settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, as well as legalising unauthorised buildings in new settlements.

This is colonialism, whether through war or illegal construction, it is further encroachment and undermines the peace process, it makes Palestinian statehood harder to achieve.

In his re-election in 2015, he pledged to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and repeatedly calls for one sided conditions to be placed on a Palestinian state, like recognising Israel as a Jewish State and selling out Arabs living in Israel; and renouncing the right of return, destroying the aspirations of the Palestinian diaspora here in Australia and around the world.

He was responsible for the 2012 and 2014 blockades of Gaza. The 2014 blockade killed over 2,200 people. There were over 6000 airstrikes and over 50,000 shells were fired into Gaza. And of course, it was mainly civilians killed.

He is making Gaza uninhabitable, and increasingly difficult for Palestinians living on the West Bank, 100,000 of whom commute into Israel every day for work, if they can get past the checkpoints in time. No wonder unemployment is so high when it’s so hard for Palestinians to get to work every day.

Of course, he boasts of building the wall.

He endangers peace and in doing so, he endangers the Israeli citizens he represents.

Netanyahu has been warmly welcomed by Malcolm Turnbull and Julie Bishop. Unfortunately there has been no hesitation; no puzzlement at his odd assertion that Australia and Israel’s friendship goes back 100 years to Beersheba during World War 1, which of course was part of Palestine. But this is a Government that calls the term “occupation” inconvenient and won’t condemn the West Australian Liberals for their preference deal with One Nation.

Netanyahu has had much to say about the Labor Party and its support for Palestine. I’m a Labor Party member and I’m proud of our party’s support for an effective and fair two state solution.

I believe Australia should recognise Palestine, as Netanyahu by his words and actions undermines the peace process every single day.

Now that you are visiting Australia, you can hear what we and most of the world have to say, we support Palestine, we recognise Palestine and we support peace.

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Julia Finn MP
Member for Granville
Parliamentary Secretary to Shadow Cabinet
160 Merrylands Road, Merrylands 2160
P: (02) 9637 1656
F: (02) 9897 1434
E: Granville@parliament.nsw.gov.au