

**Speech by Aprille Asfoura**  
**Delivered at Blue Mountains Friends of Palestine Rally**  
**Katoomba, Human Rights Day 2023**

When I first sat down to write this, knowing I needed to fit something into the space of a few minutes. I felt overwhelmed. I wanted to speak fairly and accurately. It's complicated and atrocities never have had a straightforward background.

It is not possible to speak from an academic or a political angle today, and I realised, I don't need to. Because what is happening is not about religion, it's not about politics or sides. It's about humanity. It's about the lives of thousands of people, children, babies, and families. Whose homes have been torn apart. Who are being forced to flee with nowhere to flee to. Who are being killed brutally right now as I say these words. People who have already experienced layers upon layers of physical and psychological trauma and displacement for years.

I will repeat the words of Francesca Albanese. It is impossible to claim self-defence against a country that is being occupied. The Palestinians have been under Israeli control since 1948, and it goes back as far as 1917 with the Balfour agreement. Tragically, the state of Israel has been allowed and even encouraged by many of the world powers to proceed with genocide.

After all, we live in a corrupt system, where greed and power have centre stage.

I could stand here for hours and talk to you about the plight of my father's people.

As I'm sure, so could my Israeli neighbour. But in the end, it's not complicated. It's simple.

It's ironic that my father and his family, a minority in Palestine themselves being Christian Palestinians, migrated to a country that seemingly held the golden ticket out of their threatened homeland. A home that he remembers fondly with beautiful memories of orange trees and friendly neighbours.

When I was growing up, none of the other kids had heard of Palestine. And like my dad and his family, it was easy to repress that part of ourselves. They were Australian now and I certainly didn't feel a claim to a land I'd never been to or an identity I didn't understand.

After September 11, the 'Arab' became a terrorist, and of course, a terrorist was bad. Now, much of the world is talking about Palestinian people. My sincere hope is that in the years to come, in the future my son grows up in - we do not talk about what we could have avoided in the destruction of Palestine. Palestinian people are more than just numbers in a conflict. It is a beautiful and rich culture that is being shattered at its core. I have never seen my father's land, or the inscription of 'home' carved by my grandfather above the door of his house in Bethlehem. But I have to believe I will look upon it.

I say to the Australian Government this. Australia has already played a significant role in abetting Israel - for years. As a country, we already have blood on our hands.

We have the power to change the outcome of our history, one atrocity does not have to follow another. With all the powers and politics at play, we as fellow humans demand a ceasefire.

Keep talking, keep rallying, keep putting pressure on the government, we have the power to fight. Let us fight for our brothers and sisters.

Please don't give up on our humanity.

FREE, FREE PALESTINE.

*10<sup>th</sup> December 2023*