

NATIONAL COALITION OF PALESTINE SUPPORT GROUPS

*The Australian Friends of Palestine Association Inc - SA, *Women for Palestine - Victoria, *Palestinian Charity Association - Victoria *Students for Justice in Palestine – Victoria *West Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine – WA *Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine – ACT and *Women Refugees Education Network – NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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At the end of June the National Coalition of Palestine Support Groups circulated a questionnaire to all major and some minor parties. The terms of the questionnaire were as follows:

The National Coalition of Palestine Support Groups seeks your response to the following questions:

1. Does The XYZ Party support the establishment of a Palestinian State?
2. If not, why not?
3. If it does support the establishment, what does The XYZ Party believe should be the boundaries of that State:
the '67 borders?
some other and if so what borders?
4. If the answer to 3 is (a), and assuming that is opposed by the State of Israel, would The XYZ Party support the imposition of sanctions against the State of Israel, and would your Party be prepared to support or initiate a UN process to achieve a sanction regime?
5. If the answer to 3 is (b) and asserts that it should be negotiated borders, what is the policy of The XYZ Party if it becomes apparent within a reasonable period, viz. 6 months, that no negotiated borders can be achieved? In those circumstances would The XYZ Party support a resolution for an arbitrated settlement by a U.N. authority?
6. If an arbitrated settlement was rendered unachievable by Israeli opposition whether or not that opposition was supported by the United States of America would The XYZ Party support the imposition of sanctions against the State of Israel, and would your Party be prepared to support or initiate a UN process to achieve a sanction regime?
7. If The XYZ Party does not support sanctions against the State of Israel in the circumstances premised in questions 4 or 6, then by what means does The XYZ Party propose the achievement of a Palestinian State? Why does The XYZ Party believe that such an initiative will work?
8. In the event that the Palestinian Authority declared the existence of a Palestinian State on the 1967 borders, would The XYZ Party, if in government, recognize that State? If not, why not?

The exercise was born from an abiding belief on the part of members of the National Coalition of Palestine Support Groups that the Palestinian question is *the* major foreign policy issue facing Australia and the World today. It has that status following one hundred years of dispossession from their homes and lands of the Palestinian people. That dispossession could not have occurred but for the betrayal of the Palestinians by the West, principally the United States and Great Britain. It has led to bitterness and a sense of injustice on the part of the Arab World to the West. That bitterness has spread from Arab to Muslim. The failure to address this injustice and bitterness has contributed to much of the terrorism in the World today.

Unfortunately Australia has chosen to give explicit backing to Israel, not only over the years since the end of World War II, but most critically, today, as evidenced by the recent vote in the UN General Assembly whereby Australia stood apart from the rest of the World by aligning itself with Israel and the United States in opposing a resolution calling for the dismantling of the Wall and compensation of Palestinians affected by it's building.

Responses to the questionnaire were received from all recipients save the Nationals. We have assumed the Nationals' position to be the same as its Coalition partner the Liberals.

The questions were designed to produce certainty of response. It is to be regretted that the ALP and the Liberal Party chose not to answer the questions but rather obscure their positions in a generalised response.

This Coalition of Support Groups acknowledges that the response of the Greens, closely followed by the Australian Progressive Alliance Party (Meg Lees), is the most satisfactory. The Greens gave unequivocal support to the establishment of a Palestinian State on the pre '67 borders with a commitment to supporting a UN sanctions regime against Israel until that State is established. The Greens also made a commitment to an immediate recognition of a declaration of statehood by the Palestinian Authority. The response by Meg Lees' Party on this last question was perhaps equivocal. The Socialist Alliance is also seen as having a progressive policy on the issue whilst perhaps having less enthusiasm for sanctions against Israel than this Coalition of Support Groups believes is required.

The Democrats came in marginally ahead of the two major parties in that it at least appears to support a Palestinian State on the pre '67 borders. It's failure to contemplate sanctions and its promotion of the failed (and doomed to failure) Road Map disqualifies the Democrats from endorsement by this Coalition of Support Groups.

It is a matter of great regret that the two major parties remain blind to the desperate need for strong decisive action on this issue. Both parties appear committed to the bankrupt policies of the past with the ALP being particularly disappointing in demonstrating a determination to avoid committing itself on the issue.

The National Coalition of Support Groups urges all voters who recognise that this issue is the primary foreign policy issue facing Australia today to exercise their vote wisely. Whether you are or have been in the past a traditional Labour or Liberal voter you are urged to vote for the Greens in both the lower and upper houses. In the event that you cannot bring yourself to do that in the House of Representatives you are urged to do so in the Senate. The Socialist Alliance is an acceptable alternative and the Australian Progressive Alliance Party is also deserving of your support.

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