



20 April 2025

PEACE BE WITH YOU

Josephites impelled by the greetings of this season to speak out

In recent weeks, the three Abrahamic religions have issued greetings of peace to family and friends – *Shalom, Peace be with you, Salam Alaikum*.

Yet, we continue to watch each night as Russia pours bombs on Ukraine, and Israel accelerates its violence and destruction of Gaza, and the irony of these greetings cannot escape us. As we pray and wish each other the blessings of peace this Easter, we, as Josephites, are confronted by the complexity of the demands that confront us.

In the nightly news, we face the reminders that community, religious and political leaders have been strong in their condemnation of Russia (as they should be), but have become increasingly reticent as Israel wreaks destruction on what is left of Gaza.

This is not to deny (and to condemn in the strongest possible language) the massacre and taking of hostages by HAMAS on the 7th October, 2023. The fact that they still hold hostages, despite losing more than 50,000 Palestinians to the Israeli murderers, is to be deplored. The Palestinian people are victims of both the corrupt Israeli Government and their own leaders. The possibility of a two-state solution is as far away as ever. And meantime, the violence continues.

It is clear from reports and the [nightly footage across our media channels](#) that the people of Gaza are gripped by existential terror, that their choices have become increasingly limited, and that they live daily in fear for their lives. To watch then, as the Israeli Government describes the death and destruction of Palestinians as “unfortunate” and claims that the IDF atrocities are aimed solely at the annihilation of Hamas, is deeply disturbing. Their daily assertions that the bombing, violence and destruction against homes, schools, and hospitals, are legitimate aspects of war, are morally reprehensible. Such day-by-day contentions are also cumulatively soul-destroying for the whole of the democratic world. In actual truth, as groups such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the UN have declared, these attacks constitute [nothing less than genocide](#).

The power of the Israeli Government, and the failure of leaders and media across the world to differentiate between antisemitism and the criminal genocide being committed by the Israeli Government, have engendered silence from risk-averse world leaders and a conformist media. Peter Slezak has described it as “[one of the great moral tests of our time](#)”.

We need to be clear. Antisemitism is prejudice against Jewish people. Condemnation of the atrocities in Gaza is condemnation of the Israeli Government, not discrimination against the Jewish people. Justice and truth have become the casualties of this moral failure to differentiate between the two. Conflating anti-Zionist and anti-Israel sentiment with antisemitism has become the effective

tool of the Zionist Movement, and has been used to silence the voices of those who feel impelled to speak out. Mary Kostakidis, Peter Slezak and Randa Abdel Fattah are recent targets in Australia. The arrest and deportation of pro-Palestinian protesters by masked officials in the US is a frightening phase of this intimidation and persecution. These developments in the US are a stark warning to all of us in the democratic world.

For us as Josephites this Easter, the issues are demanding, but inescapable. To speak out against the violence of the Israeli Government is not antisemitism; it is a cry for justice. To support the citizens of Gaza is not antisemitism; it is a plea for justice. To demand that food trucks be allowed to enter the Territory is not antisemitism; it is a demand for justice. To condemn the annihilation of Gaza is not antisemitism; it is a denunciation of wanton injustice. To stand for a two-state solution is not antisemitism; It is a claim for the rights of a devastated people.

[Chris Hedges is unequivocal](#) and his message this Easter Sunday is uncompromising:

The genocide in Gaza is the greatest crime of this century. It will come back to haunt Israel. It will come back to haunt us. It will usher to our doorsteps the evil we have perpetrated on the Palestinians.

You reap what you sow. We have sown a minefield of hatred and violence.

Until there is a hunger to set things right, and a strong international condemnation by international communities and leaders of the war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing and apartheid we are currently witnessing, there is little chance of any significant movement towards that peace we claim is our vision. In the absence of such condemnation, Josephites continue to ask, what can we do? What will we do?

Jan Barnett R.S.J.

Jan Barnett rsj
Josephite Justice Co-ordinator
Sisters of Saint Joseph
M 0403 634 534
www.sosj.org.au

