



# AFIC Statement on the Distinction Between Criticism of Israel and Antisemitism

Thursday 7th March, 2024

## Background

The Australian Federation of Islamic Council was established in 1964, and is the Peak Muslim Organisation in Australia, with a rich history of pioneering numerous community services and actively advocating for the rights and representation of the Muslim community.

In the current environment, with both Antisemitism and Islamophobia on the rise, we have developed a statement that reflects our current position and one that can help guide us and our communities.

As Muslims, we are guided by the principles and teachings of Islam which advocate for peace, respect, and understanding among all people, regardless of their faith, ethnicity, or background. Islam teaches us to treat every individual with dignity and compassion, emphasising the unity and brotherhood of humanity. It is with this understanding that we unequivocally condemn antisemitism in all its forms—be it through hateful rhetoric, discriminatory actions, or violent behaviour directed towards Jewish, and any other individuals or communities.

The Holy Quran, which we hold as the final revelation to humanity, calls upon us to engage in dialogue and build bridges of understanding with the "People of the Book" (a term that includes Jews and Christians), recognising the shared spiritual heritage and the commonalities between our faiths. It reminds us of the importance of justice, stating, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both" (Quran 4:135)

## Statement

In the sphere of public discourse, it is imperative to clearly distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israel's government policies and actions, and antisemitism, which is prejudice, hatred, or discrimination against Jews as a religious group. This distinction is not merely semantic but a foundation to ensuring that debates and discussions can occur in a manner that respects human rights, promotes justice, and upholds the dignity of all individuals and communities.

This is exacerbated by the Zionist lobby worldwide, which for years has claimed that Israel and Zionism stands for all Jews, and further conflate the issue by insinuating that any criticism of Israel is antisemitic. We reject the premise. As does the [Jewish Voice for Peace and the 40+ Jewish groups worldwide that oppose equating antisemitism with criticism of Israel](#).

The discussion around the relationship between Zionism, Israel, and Jewish identity is complex and multifaceted. It is important to recognise that within the global Jewish community, there are diverse opinions about Zionism and the state of Israel, and like all groups there is not uniformity of views within all Jewish individuals or groups. There exists a spectrum of perspectives within Jewish communities regarding Zionism and Israel's policies.

In discussions about Israel, Zionism, and Jewish identity, it's easy to get caught up in the heat of the

moment, especially in conversations that are emotionally charged or politically sensitive. This often leads to a common mistake: treating the terms "Jews," "Israel," and "Zionism" as if they mean the same thing.

However, it's crucial to remember that these terms represent distinct concepts.

Criticism of Israel refers to the evaluation and critique of the policies, actions, and decisions of the Israeli government, much like the critique of any other country's government. This criticism can be focused on issues such as domestic policies, foreign affairs, military actions, and the treatment of Palestinians. Such critiques are part of the global democratic tradition, where individuals and groups exercise their right to free speech to express concerns about governance, human rights, and international law. Criticism of Israel, and of any country, becomes a necessary aspect of political discourse when it seeks to address perceived injustices and advocate for policy changes based on principles of equality, justice, and peace.

Antisemitism, on the other hand, is a form of bigotry that targets individuals or groups based on their Jewish identity. It encompasses harmful stereotypes, myths, and conspiracy theories that have historically been used to justify discrimination, persecution, and violence against Jews. Antisemitism is unequivocally unacceptable and must be confronted and combated in all its manifestations, whether they occur in speech, writing, or actions. It is not criticism of a government's policies but an attack on the dignity and rights of Jewish people worldwide.

We affirm the importance of:

- Upholding the right to free speech and the critical examination of all governments' policies, including those of Israel, firstly within our traditions, and within the framework of international law and human rights standards.
- Recognising and condemning antisemitism in all its forms, understanding that it is a unique and evil form of hatred that must be addressed independently of political critiques.
- Encouraging informed, respectful, and constructive discourse that differentiates between political criticism and racial or religious hatred.

## **Conclusion**

AFIC and its members maintain the distinction between criticism of Israel and antisemitism is fundamental to fostering a world that values dialogue, respects human rights, and vehemently opposes bigotry; and

this statement aims to clarify the nuanced but crucial distinction between legitimate political criticism and discriminatory practices or beliefs. It underscores the importance of informed, respectful dialogue that advances the cause of peace and justice without resorting to hate or prejudice.

Adopted by Federal Council of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils 17 February 2024.

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

Islamic Council of Northern Territory

Islamic Council of Queensland

United Muslims of NSW

Islamic Council of South Australia

Islamic Council of Victoria

Islamic Council of Tasmania

Islamic Council of ACT

Islamic Council of Western Australia

Islamic Council of Christmas Island

# AFIC Members

Arab-Australian Friendship Society  
Bosnian United Society of ACT Inc.  
Young Muslims Association Inc.  
Australian Turkish Friendship Association  
ABH Islamic Society GHB Penshurst  
Central Coast Islamic Society  
Western Sydney Islamic Society  
Elminia Islamic Youth Centre  
Bebnine Akar District Charity Association  
Parramatta Islamic Cultural Assn  
Sydney Islamic Community Welfare  
Australian Beirut Charitable Association  
Bayt Zakat Charity Inc.  
IAAL Charitable Association  
Syria Relief Incorporated  
The Islamic Friendship Association of Australia  
Al Minia Charitable Association  
Canterbury Islamic Society  
The Australian Islamic House in Liverpool  
Lebanese Unity Association  
Tripoli Fayhaa Muslim Association Inc  
El Dunnieh Sons Charity Association  
Assalah Islamic Association  
Alebdaa Islamic Association  
Islamic Peace Association  
Jordanian Hub  
Al Salaam Islamic Society of NSW Inc  
Islah Zat Al Bayn for Reconciliation Inc  
The United Arab Moslem Association  
Islamic Society of Alice Spring  
Islamic Society of Darwin  
Islamic Society of Palmerston  
Bosniak Islamic Centre of Qld  
Islamic Society of Algester  
Islamic Society of Central Queensland  
Islamic Society of Darra  
Islamic Society of Gold Coast  
Islamic Society of Holland Park  
Islamic Society of Mareeba  
Islamic Society of Westend  
Islamic Society of Toowoomba  
Islamic Society of Mackay  
Islamic Society of Ipswich  
Islamic Society of Logan City  
Islamic Society of Durack  
Darul Uloom Academy  
Sisters with Helping Hands Inc  
Townsville Islamic Society  
Islamic Society of Gladstone  
Murray Bridge Islamic Cultural Education Society  
Islamic Association of Virginia  
The Eritrean Islamic Society of Adelaide Inc  
Sudanese Cultural and Social Society of SA  
The Islamic Outreach Assn of South Australia  
Somali Communities Council Inc  
Muslim Youth of SA  
Eritrean Muslim Community in SA

The Islamic Cultural Development Centre of Australia  
The African Muslim Association of South Australia  
Islamic Community Australia Inc  
Adelaide Malay Association Inc  
Somali Juba and Gedo Community Association Inc  
Somali United Community Association of South Australia Inc  
Eritrean and Ethiopian Youth of Adelaide Inc  
Al-Furqan Cultural Association of South Australia Inc  
Adelaide United Families Inc  
Albanian Australian Islamic Society  
Ararat Islamic Welfare Association  
United Muslim Migrant Association  
Werribee Islamic Centre Limited  
Islamic Association of Monash Mosque  
United Imams & Duaat  
United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia  
Gippsland Australian Muslim Community Inc  
Light of Hidayah Inc  
Australian Middle Eastern Council Inc.  
Alnajat Association of Australia  
Akkar Association of Australia  
Al Amin Islamic Association Victoria Inc  
Integrity Islamic Society of Australia  
Islamic Womens Council of Australia Inc.  
Mazraat Balde Australia Inc  
Australian Women Rights Association  
Australian Human Rights Association Inc  
Victorian Kuredish Associaiton Inc  
Muslim Youth Centre Victoria Inc  
Australian Future Women's Movement Inc  
Alsalaam Islamic Associaiton of Victoria Inc  
The Arabic Community Association of Victoria Inc  
Muslim Women Welfare of Victoria Inc  
Islamic Association of Katanning  
Noorul Islam Society  
Muslim Charity Community of WA Inc  
Kalgoorlie Islamic Centre  
Persutuan Isam Pulu Cocos  
Muslims WA Inc  
Madrash Shiarul Islam Inc  
The Arabic Community Association of WA  
United Australian Islamic Association Inc.  
Muslim Women Welfare & Advocacy WA Inc  
Smile of Hope  
Muslim Youth Support Centre  
International Humanitarian Aid Inc  
Muslim Defence League Inc  
Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah Inc  
Furqan Islamic Association of WA  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
Al Salam Islamic Society of WA  
Peace Univeral Society  
Freemantle District Islamic Association Inc  
Lebanese Australian Association Inc.  
Muslim Prison Welfare and Advocacy of Western Australia Inc  
Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network INC.  
United Muslims Of Western Australia INC.