



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

AFIC President Dr. Rateb Jneid's speech at Parliament House during the 60th anniversary celebration of the organisation

Assalamu Alaikom wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh and good evening,

As we gather tonight to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, we reflect on our journey—a journey of faith, community service, and advocacy. For six decades, AFIC has been at the forefront, supporting the Muslim community across Australia. From humble beginnings to becoming the peak body for Muslims in Australia, our path has been filled with both achievements and trials.

In recent years, AFIC faced significant challenges that tested our resilience and demanded a reevaluation of our strategies. Financial and structural hurdles threatened to undermine our effectiveness and our role in the community. Yet, it was through unity, dedication, and a clear vision that we overcame these obstacles. Today, I am proud to say that AFIC stands stronger than ever—financially robust, structurally sound, and once again ready to lead and serve our community.

Our achievements extend beyond overcoming internal challenges. We've expanded our physical presence across the country, enhancing our ability to serve the Muslim community more effectively. We have reinforced our commitment to the core values of unity, education, and social welfare—principles that have guided us since our inception.

However, our celebration tonight is overshadowed





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by the harrowing events unfolding in Palestine. The recent report by Save the Children, indicating over 20,000 children missing in Gaza, presumed lost, detained, or buried under rubble, is a reminder of the ongoing crisis. This situation challenges us and the international community to reflect deeply on our responsibilities.

In just the last eight months, nearly 40,000 people have been killed and over 80,000 have been injured. The entire population of over 2 million has been displaced, with children dying from hunger and thirst, and over 75% of all civil infrastructure destroyed. These are not just numbers; they represent a continuous and profound human suffering that demands our attention and action.

The situation in Gaza is dire and constitutes a clear genocide by any standard of international law. This is not merely an assertion but is being addressed as such in the International Court of Justice, where a case against Israel is unfolding. It is a scenario reminiscent of the global response to the crisis in Ukraine, where Australia stood with the international community to support justice at the ICJ.

Tonight, I call upon the Australian Government and all international bodies present here to take a firm stand, as was done against the invasion of Ukraine, to support the case against Israel at the ICJ. We must not only speak of human rights and justice but act decisively to uphold these principles.

The crisis in Palestine requires not just our attention but our immediate action. How can we, as a global community, allow such suffering to continue? We must use our influence, our resources, and our voices to bring about change and to end what can only be described as a genocide.

As far as actions go, this week an important motion was tabled in the Senate to recognise the state of Palestine, an initiative that, regrettably, was



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opposed by both the government and the opposition. This decision represents a significant setback in the pursuit of peace and justice in the region. It is AFIC's firm position that the recognition of Palestine is not merely a symbolic gesture but a fundamental step towards initiating a genuine peace process. The failure to recognise Palestine allows for the continuation of delays and roadblocks in peace negotiations by those who benefit from the status quo.

The Australian Government urgently needs to reconsider its stance on this critical issue. Recognising Palestine would signal a commitment to international law and the principles of justice and human rights. It would provide a necessary condition for meaningful dialogue and a durable peace. As members of the global community, it is imperative that we advocate for fairness and take decisive actions that lead towards peace.

We urge the Australian Government to align its foreign policy with these values and support the recognition of the state of Palestine. Doing so is not just the right thing to do; it is a crucial step towards securing a future of peace and stability for the Palestinian people.

Our efforts at AFIC are not confined to our national borders. The plight of Palestine calls for a global response—a response that aligns with our commitments to peace, justice, and the dignity of every human being. We must challenge ourselves and our leaders to be on the right side of history.

As we reflect on our own 60 years of service, let this moment also be a call to action. Let us recommit to our values of unity, education, and social welfare, and let these values guide us in our response to global crises.

Thank you for your continued support and for joining us in these efforts. Together, we can make a difference, ensuring our voices are not just heard but are part of a chorus that calls for change and justice.

Wassalamu Alaikum and good night.