



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Palestine**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 29 November 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 29 November 2012  
**Page** 14076  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** O'Dwyer, Kelly, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Ms O'DWYER** (Higgins) (12:22): Australia will shortly face a vote in the United Nations: whether or not to elevate the Palestinian Territories to observer status, bringing it in line with the Vatican City. The reasons are wide and varied as to why Australia should vote 'no', the most pertinent reason being that the Palestinian Territories are simply not ready for this upgrade in status. This is evidenced by the deep and violent frictions that exist between Fatah and Hamas. How can we expect the Palestinian Territories to progress as one entity with any degree of certainty whilst there are still two independently recognised governments? Who will put forward foreign policy—Hamas or Fatah? And on whose authority are decisions carried out—Hamas or Fatah? The practicalities of the situation are impossible.

In addition to this, any official recognition or legitimisation of Hamas should be vigorously contested at every opportunity. Hamas is a terrorist organisation whose objective is not to live in peace alongside Israel but rather exist in a world where Israel does not.

We have learnt this week that there are real divisions amongst the government as to how to vote on this issue. We have learnt that the Prime Minister, to her credit, understood these complexities and recognised that this symbolic gesture was counterproductive to attaining a sustainable and long-lasting peace in the Middle East. Whilst the Prime Minister's interest in this has been in more recent years, I cannot fault her logic that has led her to that position. But the Prime Minister was rolled in caucus by her Minister for Foreign Affairs, by other cabinet ministers and by her own backbench. There have been reports that Senator Carr, the foreign minister, was ready to speak out had the Prime Minister not caved to the militant Left in her own party, which hold the same views as their government partners, the Greens. What is most concerning to me are the reported motives that led the foreign minister to his position. Was he thinking of Australia's best interests? No. Was he thinking of the best interests of the peace process in the Middle East? No. Was he even thinking about the plight of the Palestinians? No. The only consideration the foreign minister had was the vote in western Sydney. He was more concerned about Labor's grasp on power than what is in the best interests of national foreign policy.

Today we see reports in the *Australian* that:

Some sections of the party suggest Victorian Labor is too close to the Israel lobby and does not fully understand the underlying changes in Sydney's outer suburbs.

Since when should foreign policy be dictated by demographic changes? It is up to our nation's leaders to lead, to build a rational and justified position based on facts and reasoning. Foreign policy should not, and must not, simply be based on what would win more votes at an election. It should be based on what is right. Until now, Australia has long held a bipartisan support for Israel and a two-state solution. We support Israel because it is a beacon of democracy in an otherwise autocratic region. Israel offers human rights to all of its citizens regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. No country is perfect, but this does not mean we should not stand up for our values of democracy, fairness and equality.

Minister Carr has failed in his duties to look after the best foreign interests of our country. He has proved that he has failed to use our voice in the international community, which was something that he said was so critical when campaigning for a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council. He also proved that the Prime Minister lacks authority in her own government. If only we had a Prime Minister who had the courage of her convictions to stand by her original position, rather than one who simply only ever speaks out passionately when it is in defence of her own job and her own position in government. If only we did not find ourselves in such an invidious position as this where we are seeing the constant delegitimisation of Israel in the international community through such motions as the one that has been placed before the UN today.