



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Israel

SPEECH

Wednesday, 15 June 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Dreyfus, Mark, MP

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Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Cabinet Secretary and Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (10:02): It saddens me to be again calling for the release of Gilad Shalit. Saturday, 25 June 2011 will mark the fifth anniversary and 1,825th day since he was kidnapped by the terrorist group Hamas. On the first anniversary of this war crime I addressed 300 people on the steps of Melbourne's GPO and on each anniversary since I have stood in this parliament and called for his release.

On 25 June 2006 the then 19-year-old corporal was kidnapped near Gaza in an illegal cross-border raid into Israel by Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, the armed wing of the terrorist organisation Hamas. Two other Israeli soldiers were killed in the raid. For five years Gilad Shalit has been a hostage of Hamas at an unknown location in Gaza in contravention of the Geneva convention. The International Committee of the Red Cross, other human rights organisations and even his own family have been denied contact with Gilad, who is a dual Israeli and French citizen. Gilad's family will not stop fighting for justice for their son. Noam Shalit, Gilad's father, commenced a proceeding in the Paris district court this month. He has asked that the French justice system investigate and take action against Hamas, which is illegally holding his son. He said to the French press, 'I do not know yet what this will accomplish but I can do nothing but try every avenue, hold on to every hope.' This is every parent's worst nightmare.

Yelena Bonner, famous for being an activist in the Russian human rights movement and the widow of dissident and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov, spoke in 2009 at the Oslo Freedom Forum on issues relating to Israel and made specific reference to Gilad Shalit. She asked this question of her human rights colleagues: 'Why doesn't the fate of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit trouble you in the same way as the fate of the Guantanamo prisoners?' She continued, 'He is a wounded soldier and falls clearly under the protection of the Geneva conventions. The conventions say clearly that hostage taking is prohibited, that representatives of the Red Cross must be allowed to see prisoners of war, especially wounded prisoners.' And she said at the end of her address, 'Returning to my question of why human rights activists are silent, I can find no answer except that Shalit is an Israeli soldier, Shalit is a Jew. So again it is conscious or unconscious anti-Semitism. Again, it is fascism.'

Before people call for Israel to sit down and negotiate with Hamas, they should think about the conduct of this organisation, an organisation that took power in an armed coup in Gaza and murdered hundreds of its opponents, an organisation which has authorised the firing of thousands of rockets from Gaza into Israeli communities and an organisation which to this day illegally holds Gilad Shalit hostage. On this fifth anniversary of the taking of Gilad Shalit, I call on human rights activists and world leaders to stand up, to speak up and to demand the immediate release of Gilad Shalit.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): In accordance with standing order 193 the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.