



AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS OF PALESTINE ASSOCIATION

**ANNUAL REPORT
1 July 2021– 30 June 2022**

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1. CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

AFOPA has seen another incredibly intense year of activities and achievements. State and federal elections saw us swing into action to engage directly with State and Federal candidates. Stepping up our political advocacy, AFOPA joined with APAN to commission a poll prior to the federal election; made both written and oral submissions to Parliamentary Committees; mobilised members and supporters to campaign against the adoption of the IHRA definition on antisemitism; and published articles decrying Israel's apartheid policies. And we celebrated 12 years of BDS action – part of the international BDS movement, and vitally important in educating the public about the situation in Palestine and how we can all support change.

Our fundraising efforts to support humanitarian programs in Palestine continued, with a particularly satisfying result of 400 children in the West Bank receiving glasses through the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. This work again is only possible through the generosity of our members and supporters whom we thank most sincerely.

Many other activities were undertaken throughout the year, which I invite you to read in detail in the body of the report. Included in these were another very successful Edward Said Memorial Lecture, with Noam Chomsky "in conversation", and the Palestine Talks series which again delivered stimulating presentations. These events have enjoyed enormous success and participation, encouraging us to advance the 2023 lecture and talks series.

I started this message by emphasising AFOPA's effort this year in engaging with politicians on all sides of politics. While this work takes an enormous amount of time and commitment, the path to real change in the political reality in Palestine very much lies in changing the attitudes of our governments. AFOPA will continue to urge our governments to take the necessary action, the morally right action, to bring about a just peace for Palestine and its people. And while the new government in Israel does little to inspire hope for change, there are, I believe, tentative signs of a positive shift in the attitudes of governments towards Israel. That is my hope.

It remains for me to thank Executive Committee members for their hard work during the year. Our achievements are only possible because of their commitment and generous giving of their time. I also thank our Project Officer, Sally Jeremic, who so ably supports the committee.

Edie Bransbury

Chair

Australian Friends of Palestine Association

2. INTRODUCTION

About AFOPA

The Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA) is a not-for-profit organisation based in South Australia that promotes justice for Palestinians based on international law and United Nations resolutions.

AFOPA's vision - to play an impactful role in achieving a just and equitable peace for Palestinians.

AFOPA's purpose - we exist to support the aspirations of Palestinians for justice, equality and human rights.

AFOPA's Strategic Priorities 2022-2025

In 2021-22, AFOPA secured a Multicultural SA grant which enabled us to undertake significant work to determine our strategic priorities for the next three years. We thank the South Australian Government and Dr Kylie Heneker, Strategic Solutions, for their support of this important project. Our three strategic priorities are:

Advocate and influence - to influence Australian political attitudes and effect policy change

Engage and expand – to strengthen our reach and strategic partnerships with others

Inform and activate – to raise awareness and champion action in support of Palestine

A summary of AFOPA's Strategy for 2022-2025 is at Appendix A

Executive Committee

AFOPA's work is supported by a 0.6 Project Officer position and an active Executive Committee.

Chairperson: Ms Edie Bransbury
Deputy Chairperson/Treasurer: Dr Sam Shahin
Secretary: Ms Christa Christaki

General Members: Ms Margaret Cassar, Ms Oceah Davis, Mr Mike Khizam, Ms Jeanie Lucas and Mr Imad Mahmoud.

THE 2021-2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

Political Advocacy and Campaigns

Federal Election Campaign

The 'Stand Up for Palestine' federal election campaign was a major focus for AFOPA in the first half of 2022.

The campaign focussed on South Australian members of federal parliament, new South Australian based Upper and Lower House candidates, the Minister and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and the leaders of the Coalition, ALP and Greens.

We asked our representatives to:

- Recognise Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital
- Call for an end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the inhumane blockade of Gaza
- Support the International Criminal Court to hold Israel accountable for war crimes in Palestine
- Condemn and call for an immediate end to the building and expansion of (UN-designated illegal) settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem
- Reject the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism, which has as its purpose to silence valid criticism of Israel
- Demand that Israel's apartheid regime be dismantled.

It was disappointing to receive only three responses - the ALP National Secretary, the Fusion Party and the Greens.

We made our supporters' voices heard by distributing APAN's 'I support Palestine and I vote' email platform, which resulted in 136 letters being sent to local candidates by AFOPA members and supporters, a fantastic effort.

Following the federal election, APOPA was even more motivated to make representation to the new South Australian members of the Lower and Upper Houses, seeking to engage with them on Palestine. At the time of producing this Annual Report, we were following up these requests for meetings.

Action on Apartheid

While Australia's politicians continued to wilfully ignore the truth about apartheid Israel, the human suffering worsened. On 15 July 2021, the then leader of the Opposition, Anthony Albanese, made the shocking statement that using the word apartheid to describe Israel is offensive.

AFOPA immediately wrote to Mr Albanese highlighting the findings of five reports that found that Israel is practising apartheid against the Palestinian people. These reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories and the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School – were also distributed widely to federal and state politicians, stakeholders, members and supporters.

Our own patron, Paul Heywood-Smith KC, was prolific in writing about Israel's apartheid, including his analysis 'Israel and Apartheid' published in the Public Policy Journal Pearls and Irritations in April 2022.

Opinion Poll: Attitudes on Palestine and Israel

In March 2021, AFOPA and APAN commissioned a YouGov opinion poll which looked at Australians' attitudes to Palestine and Israel. The results of this poll were used to highlight to federal election candidates that successive Australian governments have been out of step with the views of Australians on Palestine.

The poll found:

- **54%** of respondents believe that Palestine should be recognised as an independent State, while only **9%** believe that it should not
- **50%** support the position that Israel should immediately end its occupation of Palestine, as opposed to **13%** that indicated that Israel should continue the occupation
- **56%** affirm that Israel and Egypt should immediately end their siege of Gaza while a minority (**11%**) express the opposite view
- **23%** hold the view that Australia should respond to reports of Israeli apartheid by calling on the Israeli government to end its system of apartheid, while **33%** believe that Australia should engage with international human rights organisations to determine a suitable course of action. Only **14%** agree with the statement that, "No regime is perfect, Australia should remain a staunch friend of Israel."

The poll also clearly shows that these views go across political affiliations, with a majority of voters – Labor (**62%**), Coalition (**54%**) and Greens (**79%**) believing that the Australian government should call on Israel to end its apartheid regime.

See [2022 Australians' attitudes to Palestine and Israel opinion poll results](#)

The review of listing and relisting eight organisations as Terrorist Organisations

In October 2021, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) listed Hamas as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code. The first we knew of this development was when the PJCIS invited submissions to a review of the listing and re-listing of these organisations.

AFOPA made a strong and comprehensive submission to the PJCIS opposing the listing of Hamas as a terrorist organisation. The listing of Hamas as a terrorist organisation remains.

AFOPA's campaign against the motion in the SA Legislative Council to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism

In June 2022, AFOPA learned that One Nation's member of the South Australian Parliament, had put forward a motion in the South Australian Legislative Council (Upper House) for the Council to endorse and adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. This definition is controversial world-wide because 7 of the 11 examples provided to illustrate what constitutes antisemitism are concerned not with racism against Jews but criticism of Israel. The definition's working examples promote the "weaponisation" of accusations of antisemitism, which have been directed with sometimes devastating effect on individuals, often academics, journalists and politicians who have criticised Israel. Many commentators, including the lead drafter of the definition, Kenneth Stern, have criticised this weaponisation. Stern has declared that the definition was never intended to suppress free speech. However, this is how it has been used to great effect in countries such as the UK, USA, Germany and France where it has been adopted by governments, public institutions, universities and corporations to silence criticism of Israel.

AFOPA swung into action to launch a campaign against the motion with the aim of informing the 22 members of the Upper House that the definition is aimed at suppression of free speech on Palestine and Israel, and to persuade them to vote against it.

Many of our members and supporters were involved in this resistance action through an email and phone campaign to all members of the Upper House, specific Lower House MPs and then to all ALP members of Parliament. Each South Australian Lower and Upper House member of Parliament received 132 campaign emails in their Inbox. Our campaign extended the debate over several sitting days, resulted in a deferral, and was noticed throughout Australia with hundreds of people sending emails, making phone calls and personal representations to their parliamentarians.

AFOPA also reached out to many groups in the community, including Arab and Muslim communities and human rights groups. These groups joined the campaign with great effect.

In the end, on 7 July, the motion passed 15 for and 4 against. Those 4 are Tammy Franks and Robert Simms of The Greens and Connie Bonaros and Frank Pangallo of SA Best. Though the motion was passed and the IHRA definition was adopted by the Legislative Council, we believe that the campaign was successful in important ways. Many people and groups were engaged including people in other Australian states. In addition, the awareness of the Palestinian cause has been significantly raised in the South Australian parliament. This has activated the South Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine and inspired Palestine solidarity groups in other states to be on the alert for similar motions in their parliament.

The level and amount of lobbying we were able to achieve, the response of the general community and the wealth of information provided to parliamentarians and included in Parliament's official record all brought a greater awareness of issues relating to free speech and the Palestinian cause.

More Political Action

AFOPA addressed a range of other issues, including:

- Australia's abstention from a UN vote on the protection of natural resources in Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights from Israeli exploitation. Australia was one of only 14 UN members to abstain from the vote, which passed 157 to 7.
- Human rights atrocities in South Hebron, described by Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem as 'extreme violence'.
- Support for the campaign calling on the Sydney Festival to reject their acceptance of sponsorship by the Israeli government.
- Emphatically opposing Free Trade with Israel when the former Government called for submissions on this issue. Along with AFOPA, the majority of submissions cautioned against expanding trade with Israel, resulting in a free trade deal not being progressed, to date.

Street Actions and More: Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)



A dedicated group of AFOPA members and supporters maintained our presence in the streets of Adelaide, mostly in Rundle Mall, in support of the International BDS movement. This inspirational group has presented continuously since October 2010 protesting Israel's

illegal occupation of Palestine, distributing over 250,000 information leaflets and having many thousands of conversations with members of the public. In spite of constant harassment by Christian Zionists, AFOPA's BDS group has been buoyed by a measurable change in the attitudes and support by members of the public.

In addition to the weekly street actions the following important campaigns were undertaken:

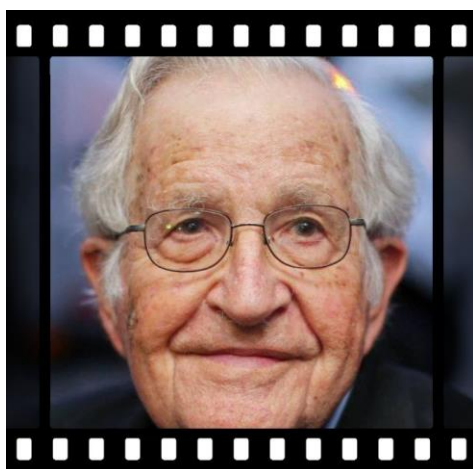
Vigil for Mohammed El-Habibi, the manager of World Vision in Gaza until his arrest by Israel 6 years ago. AFOPA partnered with APAN and Amnesty International to bring attention to this injustice.

- Specific protests were held in relation to: Israeli training of US and Australian police; Olivia Zemor's court case in Lyon France; the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism introduced in SA's Upper House.
- Actively supported national campaigns including the International Day of Action Against Puma; Miss Universe in Eilat, Israel; and the Boycott Sydney Festival Campaign.



Events and Fundraising

Edward Said Memorial Lecture (ESML)



“Why Palestine? Because it is a just cause, a noble ideal, a moral quest for equality and human rights.” So said Edward Said the renowned academic and prominent advocate for the restoration of rights to Palestinians.

Each year since 2005, AFOPA has presented the ESML with a guest speaker who challenges us to understand the situation of Palestinians and new possibilities for change. The 2021 ESML ‘A Personal Conversation with Noam Chomsky’ was a triumph!

In this memorable online Q&A session with AFOPA Deputy Chairperson Dr Sam Shahin, Professor Chomsky said he believed that an end to the Israeli oppression of Palestinians is *“not easy, but not impossible”*.

“Nothing has changed” he told us. *“Palestinians are ‘un-people’* he said, borrowing a term from George Orwell’s novel 1984. Professor Chomsky called the IDF *“human rights abusers”* and described conditions for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as *“worse than apartheid”*. He criticised Australia and the US for not standing up against the ‘Greater Israel Project’ by which Israel evicts Palestinians from their homes and farmlands and installs Jewish settlers, a violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

Professor Chomsky has now graced the ESML series twice in its history helping us to learn from his extraordinary breadth of historical knowledge while also hearing his views on contemporary topics.

AFOPA Quiz Night

The July 2021 Quiz Night, organised by AFOPA’s young members, was a fun night full of fierce competition! It was a full house at the Goodwood Community Centre, raising much needed funds for AFOPA’s humanitarian programs in Palestine.

Gala Dinner

AFOPA’s 2022 Gala Dinner ‘Young Palestinians – The Future’ was a huge success. The event was generously supported by everyone who attended, donated items for the Auction and Raffle and supported the event financially. The Cyprus Club provided the ideal venue for a Mediterranean feast followed by knafeh, the traditional Middle Eastern dessert, prepared and generously donated by the Adelaide Sisters’ Association. The night was imbued with a strong sense of solidarity and warmth. It was particularly heartening to see so many young

people - Palestinian and non-Palestinian - supporting the evening.

The Gala Dinner theme “Young Palestinians –The Future” was enthusiastically launched by the talented Glimmer of Hope Dabke Dance group. This was followed by four exceptional presentations:

- Layan Saadeh, SA 2021 Young Citizen of the Year, spoke passionately about how she, a young Palestinian who has lived in Australia for only eight years, is already making a difference to our community.
- Sophie McNeill, award winning investigative journalist and former Middle East correspondent for the ABC and SBS, gave a dynamic, informative and unforgettable address. Sophie, currently the Australia Researcher for Human rights Watch, thoroughly deserved the standing ovation she received for her first-hand experience of 'Apartheid and Persecution: Life as a Palestinian Child'.
- Gerard Horton, an Australian lawyer based in Palestine and co-founder of Military Court Watch, gave a hard-hitting account of breaches of Palestinian children’s rights in the Occupied Territories by the Israeli military.
- The night ended with a sobering yet uplifting video message from 24 year-old writer and poet Mohammed El-Kurd, who with his twin sister Muna, has become the face of resistance to the demolition of Palestinians’ homes by the Israeli Government in the Sheik Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.



The MC for the evening was AFOPA member and prominent Adelaide barrister and human rights advocate Claire O’Connor SC.

AFOPA was able to donate \$5,000 of the dinner proceeds to Military Court Watch (MCW), one of three humanitarian programs in Palestine supported by AFOPA.

Fundraising for AFOPA's Humanitarian Program

AFOPA has supported the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) for over a decade and continues to raise funds for its critical work with children in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. In 2021-22 \$17,000 was provided for eyeglasses for children in the West Bank and Gaza.

Military Court Watch (MCW) monitors, litigates and advocates for children, some as young as 10, detained by the Israeli military authorities. AFOPA has provided regular donations to MCW and was very pleased to be able to support MCW with a \$5,000 donation in 2021-22.

Francis and Merlin Nathan, AFOPA's long standing members and dynamic medical team, have made annual medical missions to Palestine for over a decade, with support from AFOPA. Francis is an ophthalmologist, who as part of a PCRF team, conducts scores of cataract and other eye surgeries each visit. Merlin is an occupational therapist who undertakes case work for disabled Palestinian children and their families as well as education programs for local occupational therapists and students.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that, for the second year, Francis and Merlin were unable to travel to Palestine. They are looking forward to November 2022 when they will undertake their next visit to Palestine.

"It is as always, a privilege and a joy to assist with the creative, energising work of the Palestine Children's Relief Fund at the coalface. This happens with the monetary and emotional support of AFOPA and its members." Dr Francis Nathan

Palestine Centre for Peace



The Palestine Centre for Peace opened in 2015 and was officially launched by the Mayor of Bethlehem, Dr Vera Baboun, in May 2016.

A first of its kind in Australia, the Centre combines a retail shop front selling products sourced from Palestine, meeting space and resource centre. In addition to the beautiful merchandise from Bethlehem Fair Trade, we added a range of Banksy themed products from the Wall Graffiti shop in Bethlehem (directly opposite the Separation Wall). AFOPA is proud to support the Palestinian artisans, traders, workers and families who produce the beautiful items we sell.

Grants

AFOPA's budget received a welcome boost with the awarding of 2 grants from Multicultural SA, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, totalling \$12,300. This enabled us to purchase much needed equipment for the Palestine Centre and our events.

Community Information and Education

Nakba Commemoration 2022



The annual Nakba commemoration was held in front of the Palestinian Community plaque on the Museum's Migration Memorial wall, in memory of the Palestinian Nakba 74 years ago. This plaque was installed by AFOPA on 15 May 2016.

The Commemoration was supported by South Australia's Palestinian community organisation, Glimmer of Hope, whose members joined the event following a walk of reflection from the Adelaide Hills to the city. In addition, AFOPA's BDS group held their street action before the event and then walked to the Museum carrying flags and placards.



This year's speeches and music were especially moving. Following a welcome from the Chief Executive of the SA History Trust, the good-sized crowd was inspired by two young Palestinian women, Farah Babaa and Beljana Dally, who spoke about what the Nakba means to them as young Palestinian Australians.

Palestine Talks



The Palestine Talks series went from strength to strength attracting increased participants via Zoom with four outstanding presentations addressing 'The Threat to Free Speech' (Mike Khizam); 'Medical Apartheid' (Dr John Guy); 'The Suppression of Debate on Israel and Palestine' (Paul Heywood-Smith KC); and 'Is a One State solution a just possibility for Israel-Palestine?' (Mike Wood).

Film Screenings

In two special events, the films 'From Under the Rubble' and "It Must Be Heaven' were screened at the Mercury Cinema providing an opportunity to introduce the reality of the Palestinian situation to a broader audience.

Media and Communications

During the 12 months AFOPA issued five Media Releases and five AFOPA Alerts, usually in response to Israeli atrocities and Australian domestic policy shifts, and seven editions of AFOPA's "3 Things" newsletter.

AFOPA's member and supporter base remained steady at around 3,000. Increasing and diversifying our member base is a key goal for 2022-23.

AFOPA's social media presence has grown this past year with increased posts on our public facing Facebook page, private Facebook group (now with over 1700 members) and Twitter. As with membership, expanding our social media presence will continue to be a focus in 2022-23.

Young People and AFOPA



AFOPA has been delighted to host University of Adelaide interns for a number of years. This year we were particularly fortunate to welcome a committed and enthusiastic group of six young people who worked individually and together to produce an outstanding five-part report analysing the US-based Human Rights Watch 2021 report entitled "A Threshold Crossed", in which HRW, for the first time in its history, deemed Israel an "apartheid state".

The intern project expanded its focus to include references to other organisations that had reached and reported the conclusion that Israel is an apartheid state, including Amnesty International's 2021 report. One intern explored the issues surrounding the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

As well as their accomplished reports, AFOPA received a much-needed injection of generational change to the Executive Committee when we were joined by one of the students.

AFOPA AGM

Our well-attended AGM provided our members with a comprehensive update on AFOPA's activities and achievements in 2021-22. The Chairperson's description of the year's highlights was followed by the Treasurer's account of AFOPA's financial performance (Attachment B). Retiring members Dr John Guy and Ahmad Al-Haji were thanked for their commitment to AFOPA's Executive Committee while Imad Mahmoud and Oceah Davis were welcomed.

Following the formalities, the Honourable Connie Bonaros MLC, one of only four Senators who opposed the motion by One Nation to endorse the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, captivated the audience with her account of the political process and her own commitment to support issues based on evidence. Connie received a standing ovation for standing up for justice and truth.



Attachment A: Financial Report 2020-21

Attachment B: AFOPA Strategy 2022-2025