

The Australian Friends of Palestine Association Incorporated

MEDIA RELEASE

23 March 2004

The Australian Friends of Palestine Association condemns in the strongest terms the assassination of Sheik Ahmad Yassin by the Israeli forces and share in the grief of the Palestinians. This attack on the most prominent leader of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is another act of state sponsored terrorism against the Palestinians. It underlines the Israeli government policy of creating obstacles and impediments to reach any peaceful solution to the conflict. The Israeli government knows that the continuous siege of the occupied Palestinian territories and sustained military operations will not stop the Palestinian resistance to the occupation. In this context any assassination or killing of any Palestinian is a waste of human life without any outcome for either side. There can be only one reason for it, namely to provoke retaliation which will avoid peace talks which can only result in territorial compromise by Israel.

It also brings to light the deceit that the Israeli government propagates that it intends to evacuate the settlements in the Gaza Strip. Many Western governments saw such plan as a positive step by the Prime Minister of Israel. We now understand that the real intention was to create chaos so as to be able to blame the Palestinians for rejecting yet another "generous" offer.

We call on the Australian government to condemn this senseless attack on the Palestinian leadership and play an active role to bring Israel to account. It must be made clear to Israel that Australia expects it to comply with the norms of a civilized country.

The assassination of Sheik Yassin will bring peace to neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians. It will bring more violence and killing and will create more hatred and radical actions. It seems that is what Sharon wants.