



## **Speech for Anglican Overseas Aid Annual General Meeting**

**Melbourne, 29 November 2016**

- Good evening distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen
- It is an honour to be a guest speaker tonight at the annual general meeting for Anglican Overseas Aid
- Firstly, I'd like to give special thanks to the CEO of AOA, Reverend Dr Bob Mitchell, for giving me the opportunity to speak to you tonight
- In recent times, we have cooperated to form a strong relationship between AOA and the Palestinian Embassy in Canberra
- I have also had the great honour of meeting the Most Reverend Dr Phillip Freier on multiple occasions in Melbourne and Canberra. I was impressed by his nuanced perspective of the Israel-Palestine conflict and his genuine positions towards reconciliation, peace, and justice in Palestine
- I was privileged to host Reverend Dr Freier at a lunch with the Arab Ambassadors to Australia, where I was touched by his words regarding Christians in the Middle East and the role of Christians in bridging gaps between East and West
- Christians form a vital part of Palestinian society, and I hope that they can continue to play their crucial role as part of the wider Middle-Eastern society
- Christian values feed into the strong moral vision of the AOA for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world free of poverty
- The fantastic work that AOA undertakes in Palestine has a deeply personal connection for me—not only because of my long career in the development sector in Palestine, but also because I was born in St Luke's Hospital in Nablus, an Anglican hospital that is a proud part of the AOA's historical work in Palestine

- Two other Palestinian hospitals that AOA are currently providing vital support to are the Spafford Children's Centre in East Jerusalem and the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza
- The AL Ahli Arab Hospital provides much-needed healthcare services to around 32,000 outpatients and 2,100 inpatients each year, regardless of ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, or economic status
- They have provided vital disaster relief services in Gaza, in response to the ongoing violence in the area
- Following their mission to provide inclusive healthcare, the Al Ahli Arab Hospital established the Women's Health, Women's Rights project in 2009. This project aims to improve the survival rate of women with breast cancer through earlier detection, appropriate treatment referrals, support for women with breast cancer, advocacy for improved access to medical treatment, and addressing stigma related to breast cancer
- AOA likewise conduct effective breast cancer awareness campaigns here in Australia
- The Spafford Children's centre in East Jerusalem works with vulnerable and disadvantaged children, including those affected by the ongoing conflict, discrimination, and violence
- Unfortunately, there are many such challenges to development in Palestine
- Palestinian attempts at state-building, institution-building, and economic development are severely constrained by the Israeli occupation
- The illegal Israeli settlement project has continued unabated; occurring alongside the demolition of Palestinian homes, physical and verbal abuse, the detention of Palestinian children, and the confiscation of Palestinian land, water, and other vital resources
- These human rights violations heavily undermine efforts at development in Palestine, especially in the continuously strained healthcare sector
- However, Palestinians have continued to draw on their remarkable resilience to form unique development strategies in order to overcome constraints and provide vital quality services to their people under occupation

- This would not be possible without the support of reputable international organisations such as AOA who, by providing development assistance, contribute greatly to strengthening the Palestinian people and allowing them to remain steadfast in the face of oppression
- I look forward to future cooperation between the Palestinian Embassy in Canberra and AOA and I will continue to do whatever I can to support AOA in their provision of quality healthcare and educational services in Palestine
- Thank you very much for your time tonight and I hope that you all have a wonderful evening

