

The General Delegation of  
Palestine to Australia,  
New Zealand and the  
Pacific



Intern Policy Research  
Report

**Palestine Civil Society Groups in  
Australia: A Profile**

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# Preface and Acknowledgements

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*Palestine Civil Society Groups in Australia: A Profile* is the first attempt to understand and analyze the vision, strategies, mandate and structure of the major advocacy and solidarity groups working on Palestinian issues in Australia. It is also a serious attempt to clarify the mandate of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific (the Delegation) and to clarify its relationship with civil society groups in Australia.

The study's main objective is to provide important background knowledge for a more professional and workable relationship between the Delegation and the advocacy sector in Australia.

It is my strong belief that the findings and recommendations of this study will contribute substantially to the development of the work of the advocacy groups in Australia. The Delegation is very interested in discussing these findings and recommendations further and build on them.

On behalf of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all friends and colleagues who have contributed to the production of this excellent research report.

In particular, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Nishadh Rego, the researcher and the report writer, for his commitment, impressive research skills and dedication in producing such a high caliber research report. Nishadh worked at the General Palestinian Delegation on voluntary basis and devoted a considerable amount of time to completing the report.

I would also like to thank Patricia Abbott for providing valuable comments on the content and structure of the report.

I would like to thank all those who agreed to be interviewed and provided information about their organisations. The professional contributions of those individuals and organizations have been instrumental in developing this report.

Again, I hope this research will be a beginning for more enhanced and effective advocacy work in Australia.

Ambassador, State of Palestine

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Rationale:

There are over twenty 'pro-Palestine'<sup>1</sup> civil society groups in Australia. Although approaches, capacities, and levels of sustainability differ, as a collective, these civil society organizations play an important role in sustaining the Palestinian cause in Australia.

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific (GDOP) recognizes the importance of collaborating closely with civil society. The GDOP's Annual Report 2011 sees as a core objective the need to "strengthen existing relationships and develop new relationships with civil society organizations in Australia and in New Zealand, including the Australian-Palestinian community."<sup>2</sup> To this aim, the GDOP has committed resources to support the work of these organizations.

An important recent achievement in the advocacy space is the formation of the Australia-Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) in April 2011. APAN is the first Australian civil society group to incorporate and represent sectoral interests within a networked organization.<sup>3</sup> It is positioned to be the primary organization through which Palestine-advocates lobby national parliamentarians and decision makers in Australia.

Despite APAN's successes, key challenges to effective and sustainable Palestine-advocacy across Australia remain. The lack of constituency and finances presents formidable structural constraints. In addition, there is room for groups to broaden the nature, scope, and effectiveness of initiatives.

The rationale for this research paper is to enable the GDOP to accurately understand Palestine advocacy and activism initiatives in Australia, so as to work effectively with Pro-Palestine civil society within the limits of the role and mandate of the GDOP. The research examines the development of pro-Palestine civil society, the scope of work performed by groups and initiatives, and challenges faced by the movement, as expressed by prominent individuals within it.

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase, 'pro Palestine' can mean a number of different things given the diversity of opinions on final status issues, the peace process, and the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement. The term is used for lack of a better one.

<sup>2</sup> GDOP Annual Report 2011, pg. 30

<sup>3</sup> GDOP Annual Report 2011-2012, pg.30

## 1.2 Objectives

This paper has two main objectives.

First, the paper develops a consolidated profile of Palestine related civil society in Australia. The profile paper aims to provide readers with an overview and base knowledge of Palestine advocacy initiatives in Australia. The profile examines

- the organizational structures, capacities and scope of Palestine related civil society across the country
- the political messages and narratives articulated
- the strategies, and activities undertaken

Second, the paper provides an account of how advocates, activists, and practitioners view and understand Palestine related civil society in Australia. The paper outlines key responses from interviews with prominent advocates and activists for Palestine in Australia. The responses highlight advocates' perceptions of the challenges to more effective advocacy, and ideas for overcoming such challenges. It also addresses some possible approaches to the current Liberal Coalition government, and sign posts other movement, from which ideas and strategies may be learned.

Through these two sections, the paper comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the movement, and provides recommendations for future work in relation to Palestine related civil society in Australia and the potential role of the GDOP in this work.

## 1.3 Methodology

In order to write the profile, qualitative information on 27 different groups<sup>4</sup> has been gathered in three ways:

- from organizations' constitutions and strategic plans;
- from organizations' websites, newsletters, and videos;
- from online research about Jewish advocacy and advocacy on other political issues in Australia;

This information has been consolidated into an excel spreadsheet which includes organizations' names, locations, political messages and narratives, goals/objectives, activities, organizational structure, funding, key contacts, and online details. Appendices have been developed to categorize organizations' political messages, goals/objectives, and activities.

The profile only analyses domestic groups. The list excludes international organizations, human rights and development NGOs, and the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, all of which engage in the Israel-Palestine conflict, but by no means exclusively.

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix 1 provides a list of all groups

Although some Palestinian civil society groups – the General Union of Palestinian Workers and the Australian Palestinian Club – are included in the profile, others aren't. These include organizations such as the United League of the Australian Palestinian Workers, and the Australian Palestinian Association for Blacktown among others.<sup>5</sup> These organizations have been omitted largely because there is very little information about them available either online or in the literature.

It is recognized that secondary research, especially when confined largely to internet resources, can be unsystematic and incomplete. However, this approach has been taken in part due to time and resource constraints.

For the second section, the questionnaire was composed of five standard questions, posed in the same order to ten prominent Palestine-advocates in Australia. Interviews took anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes depending on the comprehensiveness of answers, and the need for follow up questions. The reason for the highly standardized structure was to be able to accurately capture the diversity of responses about core underlying issues – the challenges, the ways to overcome them, approaches with the current government, lessons learned from other advocacy movements, and the GDOP's role in Australia.

Advocates interviewed are from across the country, from across political persuasions, and from organizations with divergent political mandates. They were interviewed primarily because they are highly active within the movement. Other advocates were approached but declined to be interviewed and, in some cases, respond.

The section is presented to highlight the main challenges and potential solutions for overcoming challenges, as listed by interviewees. Questions about the approaches to the current government, the GDOP's role in civil society, and lessons from other civil society movements in Australia are weaved into the prose.

#### **1.4 Conceptualizing Advocacy: An Overview**

In order to better understand the state of Palestine related civil society in Australia, it is important to contextualize the movement within a framework for political participation in liberal democracies.

The preferred framework emanates is taken from a distinction between 'citizen' and 'cause' oriented politics, which Harvard political scientist Pippa Norris has used to capture key trends in political action in the West over the last fifty years. The distinction is useful in order to understand where the Palestine civil society movement in Australia fits within broader civil society in Australia.

Citizen-oriented politics "focuses primarily upon how citizens can influence

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<sup>5</sup> The Australian Arab Jerusalem Club, the Palestinian Press Bureau, the Australian Palestinian Youth Committee, and the Australian Foundation for Palestinian Children are others.

representative democracy.”<sup>6</sup> The main goal of such politics is to influence public policy choices by ensuring certain actors or ideological platforms enter parliamentary politics or hold the balance of power in government.<sup>7</sup> In other words, citizen-oriented politics is the primary vehicle for citizens to hold governments and politicians to account within the parameters of representative democracy. Citizen-oriented political action emphasizes political engagement either directly through voting or indirectly through party membership, campaigning, letter-writing, or protest politics.

By contrast, cause-oriented politics is less about engaging citizens in the actions of representative democracy and more about affecting change on specific issues. Norris notes two main distinctions between ‘citizen’ and ‘cause’ oriented activism. These are:

1. Cause-oriented politics tackles a much broader range of issues than citizen-oriented politics.
2. Cause-oriented politics utilizes a wider array of strategies and is directed at a broader array of actors within the nation-state than the parliamentary and party political system.

#### **1.4.1 The Breadth of Issues**

With the advent of globalization – the proliferation of cosmopolitan languages and institutions of rights and freedoms; the advent of new communications technologies; and spread of economic and human capital - the range of issues that fall within the scope of the 'political' is much broader. Cause-oriented politics in liberal democracies such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia encompasses economic, political, and moral issues at local, national, and global levels. The spectrum includes concerns from concrete economic public policy debates such as industry subsidies, wage rates or taxation to post-materialist social or identity issues such as LGBTI rights and global political or moral dilemmas such as climate change.

As organized political activism emerges around moral or social issues, politicians are drawn into debates that traditionally fall outside the domain of public policy. Similarly, members of society form more creative and diverse political groupings develop and maintain a more multifaceted relationship with the political system, and in turn altering the very contours of the political system itself.

#### **1.4.2 Diverse Target Audiences and Strategies**

The diversity of causes necessitates that cause-oriented activism pursues a broader array of strategies and addresses a broader audience.

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<sup>6</sup> Pippa Norris, “Young People & Political Activism: From the Politics of Loyalties to the Politics of Choices”, *Report for the Council of Europe Symposium* (November 2003) 3.

<sup>7</sup> Norris, “Young People & Political Activism”, 2.



Many moral or political causes cannot be solved within the parliamentary political system alone. They necessitate a longer-term, multidimensional approach to shifting societal attitudes both within and outside of parliament. As Norris writes cause-oriented politics “aims to reform the law, to influence the policy process, as well as to alter systemic patterns of social behavior or moral norms.”<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, cause-oriented political movements adopt a more expansive array of strategies and target a wider audience.<sup>9</sup> The onset of climate change, for example, is a social, economic, political, intellectual, and moral issue. Responding to climate change is not simply a question of electing a supportive parliamentarian who will adopt the correct policy or lobbying members of parliament, as might be the approach within citizenship-oriented politics. Responding to such an issue requires the proliferation of facts, extensive public intellectual and political debate, and consensus on strategies to alleviate or cope with the problem. Such an approach necessitates a concurrency of diverse strategies – political lobbying, campaigning, awareness-raising, community education, and boycotts – by a range of actors – lobbyists, professionalized advocacy bodies, citizens groups, students, and concerned citizens and aimed at a range of community members. The breadth of involved demographics and diversity of activities is what distinguishes cause-oriented politics from citizen-oriented politics, as defined by Norris.

A current example of such a diverse approach is the growth of the divestment activism within the climate change movement in Australia, the UK, and the United States. Aimed at forcing systemic political change necessary to reduce carbon emissions, community organizations such as 350.org, led by scientists, activists, community leaders, and students campaign to pressure large public and private institutions to divest from the fossil fuel industry. The strength of the movement is that it encourages students and community members to utilize their inherent influence as consumers to encourage institutions such as universities and banks to make more ethical investment decisions. This form of politics is unique to cause-oriented activism. It harnesses the individual’s role as consumer-in-society rather than citizen-in-society to affect change on a particular issue by totally bypassing the parliamentary political system and representative democracy.

There are overlaps in strategies utilized in citizen and cause oriented activism. Political lobbying and letter writing campaigns, for example, are key components of both forms of activism. Nevertheless, as illustrated above, cause-oriented activism goes beyond what Norris calls the older focus on citizenship activities designed to influence elections and the make up of government.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.5 Classifying Actors within Cause-Oriented Activism**

There is an inherent diversity in cause-oriented politics. In order to distinguish between these elements, it is useful to differentiate between advocacy and activism

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<sup>8</sup> Pippa Norris, “Political Activism: New Challenges, New Opportunities”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 641.

<sup>9</sup> Norris, “Young People and Political Activism”, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Norris, “Political Activism: New Challenges, New Opportunities”, 641.

within cause-oriented politics. Nicole George takes up this distinction through her research on women's rights NGOs in Fiji.<sup>11</sup> She argues that a majority of studies on civil society, and transnational advocacy fail to sufficiently acknowledge the differences in the practices of these two approaches to politics.<sup>12</sup> Adopting one or the other approach has definitive consequences for the organization's goals, how the organization is structured and operates, how the organization is perceived in the public sphere, and whether the organization actually achieves its goals.<sup>13</sup>

Advocacy, according to George, is a measured and formalized style of political negotiation within recognized political circles where critical voice is potentially muted in order to achieve conservatively envisaged goals. Activism is a more immediate, confrontational, autonomous, and informal brand of NGO activity outside recognized political circles.<sup>14</sup> The core distinction is the organization's engagement in recognized political circles. Such engagement determines goal and strategy setting, the nature of activities undertaken, the tone of public engagement, and ultimately the organization's influence with decision makers.

Advocacy organizations tend to, by definition, engage constructively with decision makers. Such engagement affords them legitimacy in the eyes of the decision maker, a high profile platform to articulate views, and greater material resources.<sup>15</sup> Critics argue that such engagement often comes at the cost of autonomy; that is the lack of unfettered freedom in the nature of positions articulated and the means by which they are articulated. Positions that are unabashedly critical of government policy and are articulated in ways that bypass engagement with government itself (eg. protest) may have serious consequences for the legitimacy and sustainability of the organization.

It is useful to capture groups within a particular movement on a spectrum, with professionalized advocacy at one end and grassroots activism on the other. Table 1 illustrates what the two ends of such a spectrum may look like.

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<sup>11</sup> Nicole George, "Advocacy or Activism? Gender Politics in Fiji", *IPS Working Paper* (October 2004) 1 – 39.

<sup>12</sup> George, "Advocacy or Activism?", 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

*Table 1: Advocacy and Activism*

	Target Audience	Nature of Activity	Desired Outcome
Advocacy	Decision makers	Persuasive – lobbying/negotiation	Clearly defined; feasible for current decision makers within defined policy and political parameters
Activism	General public; local communities	Denunciative – public activities such as protest, street demonstrations, strike actions, public meetings	Diffuse and not necessarily feasible for current decision makers within defined policy and political parameters

The reality of a political movement is more complex. Organizations often have multiple desired outcomes and target audiences, and undertake different kinds of activities. Organizations exhibit the aforementioned characteristics to varying degrees depending on, amongst other factors, the broader national political culture, the nature of the organization’s constituency, and the resources available.

However, it is true to say that all organizations have primary goals, target audiences, and strategies which necessitate choosing and sacrificing certain target audiences, goals, and strategies over others.

## 2. Pro Palestine Civil Society Groups in Australia: An Introduction

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The Palestine civil society movement in Australia represents one such cause-oriented political movement. Utilizing the broad definitions of advocacy and activism in the previous section, the following is a more nuanced set of categories for Palestinian civil society groups in Australia. The categorization is as follows in Table 2.

*Table 2: Categorizing Palestine related civil society in Australia*

	Target Audience	Goals	Activities
Advocacy	Focus primarily on key decision makers in Australia	Clearly defined; feasible for current decision makers within defined policy and political parameters	Evidence-based lobbying/negotiation; awareness-raising through media and public relations; networking; research
Solidarity-Activist	General public and local communities	Diffuse and more ambitious; not necessarily feasible for current decision makers within defined policy and political parameters	Public activism such as petitions, protests, letter-writing, posters/leaflets/ BDS; awareness-raising through forums, films, art, social media
Special Interest	Defined demographic constituencies (eg. church-goers or union members)	Clearly defined; not necessarily feasible for current decision makers within defined policy and political parameters	Awareness-raising through forums, films, art, social media; may also participate in public activism and lobbying/negotiation

## **2.1 Structure, Scope, Capacity: (target audience, geographic reach, organizational structure, funding sources, employees)**

Groups' organizational structures, capacity for program development and campaigning, and scope differ significantly both across and within classifications.

### **2.1.1 Key Points**

- The Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) is the largest, and most influential of all organizations in the country.
- Smaller advocacy groups such as Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA) and the 'sister-cities' organizations tend to be well organized and structured, but lack national reach and consistent engagement with national level decision makers.
- There is a diversity of organizational forms within the solidarity-activist category. Organizations range from active, influential, and long-standing community activist organizations such as the Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine (CJPP) to smaller, less active, and loosely structured student or rural solidarity groups.

- Special interest groups are influential with their specific constituencies. Some of these constituencies are large and influential within the Australian political system. Special interest groups also tend to be relatively well organized, and resourced, with funds and manpower coming from within the constituency. By definition, their reach is limited to their specific constituents.

### **2.1.2 APAN**

APAN actively targets decision makers at a national level. The organization lobbies key political figures such as cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and opposition party members, facilitates public polls on issues such as UN Statehood, and hosts prominent speakers such as Ilan Pappé in Australia.<sup>16</sup> Given its status as an umbrella network of smaller, localized organizations, APAN is represented in most major cities in Australia. APAN has more than thirty members comprising churches, unions, Palestinian solidarity groups, Jewish groups, aid and development organizations, Palestinian diaspora groups, and other civil society bodies.<sup>17</sup>

Given that APAN is a network, it elects an executive committee comprising of personnel from its member organizations, including leaders from Australia's Arab and Palestinian communities.<sup>18</sup> APAN's advocacy delegations are comprised of these same leaders, thus providing a voice for some of these smaller organizations in lobbying efforts with decision makers. Nevertheless, advocacy efforts take place under the banner of APAN.

Importantly, APAN has established a consultative relationship with the GDOP and meets with the organization's leaders thrice a year. This relationship is one of the GDOP's key links to Palestine civil society groups in Australia.

APAN employs a part time executive officer and is funded through online and in-kind donations and fundraisers.

Although APAN is the primary, recognized Palestine-advocate at the national level, other groups play an important role in local or community level advocacy.

### **2.1.3 AFOPA**

AFOPA is a South Australia-based organization founded by five prominent Adelaide community members in 2003. AFOPA is very active in the Adelaide community, organizing exhibitions and cultural events, sourcing funding for development projects in the oPT and organizing high profile public forums and lectures. The Annual Edward Said Memorial lecture is a national profile event that attracts some of the most prominent intellectuals, commentators, and activists on the issue. AFOPA is

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<sup>16</sup> APAN, "APAN Activities", *APAN Website* <http://apan.org.au/apan-activities/> (unknown) accessed 5 January 2014.

<sup>17</sup> APAN, "About APAN", *APAN Website* <http://apan.org.au/about/> (unknown) accessed 5 January 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Current board members include Mr Issa Shaweesh, Professor Bassam Dally, and Mr Moukles Salah

also a highly active member of APAN's lobbying efforts – the organization is regularly represented at lobbying sessions with parliamentarians in Canberra.

AFOPA has been an incorporated association since 2004. AFOPA offers a paid membership with yearly and multi-year options. It primarily raises funds through fundraising events, and donations.

AFOPA is distinct from APAN in that it officially supports the Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

#### **2.1.4 Leichhardt Friends of Hebron and Marrickville Friends of Bethlehem**

The Leichhardt Friends of Hebron (LFoH) and Marrickville Friends of Bethlehem (MFoB) constitute what might be called the sister cities approach to advocacy. Both are community organizations made up of members who are residents of the respective suburbs, the Inner West, and Sydney.

The local councils of Leichhardt and Marrickville designated Hebron and Bethlehem sister cities in the mid-2000s. The large Arab and Palestinian immigrant populations in both Sydney areas have contributed to these designations. "Bethlehem was chosen as one of Marrickville's sister cities because it is a multicultural city.....and residents from Palestine have made a valuable contribution to the local Marrickville area"<sup>19</sup>, states the Marrickville Council website.

These official relationships between local Australian councils and Palestinian townships have enabled LFoH and MFoB's to emerge. Due to the official sister city relationship, both organizations retain a measure of influence with local politicians. MFoB's website states that it has worked with "three Marrickville mayors who have encouraged support for Bethlehem."<sup>20</sup> In 2012-2013, MFoB wrote to local federal member Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd, about settler attacks in Bethlehem, hosted a meeting of local city counselors with the Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of Bethlehem<sup>21</sup>, and facilitated the Council's \$10,000 donation for a children's playground in Bethlehem.<sup>22</sup> Both groups also facilitate cultural and social exchanges with their Palestinian sister cities of Hebron and Bethlehem.

Both organizations receive financial support through donations, and fundraisers. It is not known whether they receive funding from the local councils.

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<sup>19</sup>Marrickville Council, "Council News", *Marrickville Council Website*, <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/action/NOTEMPLATE?s=0,pURL=bethlehem>, (unknown) accessed 12 March 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Friends of Bethlehem, "Marrickville News", *Friends of Bethlehem website*, [http://friendsofbethlehem.org/?page\\_id=91](http://friendsofbethlehem.org/?page_id=91) (unknown) accessed 10 March 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Friends of Bethlehem, "About Us Page", *Friends of Bethlehem website* [http://friendsofbethlehem.org/?page\\_id=6](http://friendsofbethlehem.org/?page_id=6) (unknown) accessed 10 March 2014.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

### **2.1.5 Solidarity-Activist Groups**

Most solidarity-activist groups are born out of collective action by individuals in local communities. The majority of these organizations are based in big Australian cities. Four groups, namely, Australians for Palestine (AFP), Justice for Palestine (JFP), Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA – Melbourne), and Palestine Solidarity Campaign are Melbourne-based; CJPP, and Justice for Palestine Matters (JFPM) are located in Sydney; Friends of Palestine WA (FOPWA) and Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine (AJPP) are Perth and Canberra based community groups respectively, and Just Peace and Palestinian and Jewish Unity are located in Brisbane. Byron Friends of Palestine are an example of a small, loosely structured, grassroots community group.

These solidarity-activist groups tend to be founded and led by local community members – students, activists, and local community leaders. In the case of larger and more established organizations such as CJPP, coverage extends to sympathetic members across the cities in which groups are based. In other cases such as that of Byron Friends of Palestine, JFPM or Students for Palestine, membership and influence is limited to smaller towns, particular social circles, or demographics such as university students.

A number of solidarity-activist groups are linked with larger Socialist and Marxist student and community groups in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. CAIA-Melbourne, Students for Palestine, and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign are key examples.

In many cases, coalitions of voting members elect a representative annual committee, which determines the group's priorities and activities. Some organizations such as CJPP, and CAIA-Victoria comprise of individual members and other local community groups. All the organizations have designated volunteer leaders. AJPP elects a 'chair', and AFP an 'editor' and 'expert analyst'. In effect, people in these positions lead the organizations and serve a variety of functions – organizing events, raising funds, balancing accounts, and creating webpages.

Funding is almost exclusively sourced from private donations and fundraisers. Budget levels differ drastically. Some organizations are richly endowed with funding from wealthy businessmen, and other established organizations such as CJPP are able to raise significant funds from annual fundraisers. Smaller, less established groups have fewer sources of official funding and rely heavily on localized fundraising or members' personal contributions. None of the listed solidarity-activist organizations employ staff members.

Students for Palestine (SFP) groups exist in universities around the country. From information available online, SFP groups appear to be most active on university campuses in Melbourne. SFP members at Monash and University of Melbourne have occupied executive student council positions in the past. It is unclear as to how closely connected these groups are with each other. It is hard to discern how influential these groups are across the country. There is little available information about the organizational structures of these groups and how they are funded.



### **2.1.6 Special Interest Groups**

Special interest groups emerge from specific and defined demographics. In the case of Palestine-advocacy, these demographics include Jewish communities, certain Christian communities, union based groups, and the Palestinian community in Australia.

ADJS and IJAV are two groups that have emerged from the broader Jewish community in Australia.

ADJS is a Melbourne-based association of members with an elected committee that aims to counter dominant narratives about Israel and Palestine within the Jewish community and voice an alternative perspective on these issues. The association is active within the Melbourne Jewish community and organizes lectures, discussion groups, rallies and film screenings. ADJS engages with Australian community groups on a range of other issues such as indigenous and minority rights. ADJS sources funding from fund raising events, online donations, and paid membership.

IAJV's influence within the Jewish community in Sydney comes from that of its four convenors - Peter Slezak, Antony Loewenstein, Eran Asoulin, and James Levy, and the existence of a network of similar groups in Europe and the United States. IAJV's organizational structure is slightly different from most other organizations. There are close to 500 signatories of IAJV's founding principles document, however the group has no formal membership or elected governing structure. The organizers reject the notion of leadership, referring to their role as "closely analogous to that of editors of a journal or magazine in which articles and statements are published that express the opinions only of those who explicitly sign it."<sup>23</sup> This confines IAJV's organizational capacity and role to that of publishing online opinion pieces and articles authored by individual organizers. IAJV seeks online donations, presumably to fund its web platform.

PIEN is a national network of individuals and organizations from the Australian Christian – Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Churches of Christ, Lutheran, Religious Society of Friends, Uniting Churches - community. The organization has been classified in the special interest category because it specifically targets Australia's large Christian constituencies across the country and retains moderate influence within them. It is worth noting that in the 2011 Census, over 60% of Australians identified as 'Christian' or 'Catholic.'

PIEN has formal relationships with important religious organizations such as the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Christian community in Israel and Palestine, and Church-based international aid organizations.<sup>24</sup> The Network also a key member of APAN, and is one of the few civil society groups that employs a part time staff member. PIEN has received funding from other Christian organizations in Australia such as Act for Peace, the Major

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<sup>23</sup> Independent Australian Jewish Voices, "About Page", *IAJV Website* <http://iajv99.wordpress.com/about/> (unknown) accessed 12 November 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network, "About Page", *PIEN Website* <http://pien.org.au/about/> (unknown) accessed 14 November 2013.

Issues and Theology Foundation, Anglican Overseas Aid, World Vision Australia and the Uniting Church's President's Table.<sup>25</sup>

APHEDA is the "overseas humanitarian aid agency"<sup>26</sup> of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). It funds and implements aid and development projects around the world in collaboration with local governments, trade unions, and NGOs.<sup>27</sup>

APHEDA has been sponsoring and running development projects in the oPT for 25 years.<sup>28</sup> Projects have contributed to institutional development, skills and capacity building for individuals in the public and private sectors, assisting poverty reduction, building English language skills for labour markets, environmental awareness campaigns and improving agricultural production.<sup>29</sup> APHEDA is currently involved in three health care, and food security projects in Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza,<sup>30</sup> and in a humanitarian appeal for Gaza.<sup>31</sup>

APHEDA has been categorized as a special interest group because it represents the large union constituency in Australia. As of August 2011, 14% of part time employees and 20% of full time employees in Australia were union members.<sup>32</sup> According to APHEDA's annual report, thousands of trade union activists and members contribute funds and expertise to APHEDA's international development work.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, activist networks in all seven Australian states and territories undertake fundraising activities and campaign on human rights and development issues at local union level.<sup>34</sup> It is vital that other Palestine civil society groups in Australia groups work with sympathetic and connected trade union activists within APHEDA to raise the profile of the Palestinian cause.

APHEDA also receives millions in funding from AusAID<sup>35</sup> on an annual basis. This relationship guarantees APHEDA a degree of lobbying influence within the bureaucracy in Canberra. It is important to explore the lobbying potential that stems from this relationship.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, *Union Aid Abroad APHEDA Annual Report 2012*, (unknown: 2012), 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, "APHEDA Middle East Projects", *Union Aid Abroad APHEDA website* [http://www.apheda.org.au/projects/mideast/history/1252027379\\_16862.html](http://www.apheda.org.au/projects/mideast/history/1252027379_16862.html) (unknown) accessed 4 April 2014.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> APHEDA, *APHEDA Annual Report 2012*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> APHEDA, "APHEDA Middle East Projects".

<sup>32</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), "Employee Earnings, Benefits, and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2011", *ABS Website* <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/lookup/6310.0Main%20Features2August%202011?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6310.0&issue=August%202011&num=&view=> (unknown) accessed 23 February 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, *Union Aid Abroad APHEDA Annual Report 2013*, (unknown: 2013), 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> In 2012-2013, APHEDA received close to \$2.7 million from AusAID for a number of projects including food security projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These numbers are likely to change as a result of significant budget cuts to foreign aid spending.

Both the General Union of Palestinian Workers and the Australian Palestinian Club have been in existence since the 1970s. In their heyday in the 80s, the groups conducted closed doors advocacy with members of parliament and government, ran public campaigns, and received strong media coverage for their work. The organizations continue their work today, albeit with fewer resources. Prominent members of the Palestinian community in Australia lead both groups.

## **2.2 Political Messages**

### **2.2.1 Key Points**

- The majority of groups utilize the language of international law and human rights to articulate arguments.
- APAN does not articulate a definitive solution (eg. one vs two state) because it is made up of members with varying views.
- Advocacy and solidarity-activist groups articulate messages in different forums, to different audiences. This changes the tone, tenor, and language of the message, despite the underlying message being very similar.
- Special activist groups articulate similar messages to advocacy and solidarity-activist groups, but communicate in language that resonates with their niche constituencies. An example is PIEN's use of theological justifications for change.

### **2.2.2 Key Trends**

APAN is one of the few groups in the country to articulate clear positions on key political issues in the conflict. These positions are articulated during lobbying visits with parliamentarians and members of cabinet. It is harder to find these positions articulated in public. Nevertheless, past public APAN commentary on the prospects of ongoing negotiations has explicitly recognized the right of return for Palestinian refugees, the PA's claim for East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, and obstacles to the creation of a viable Palestinian state due to continued settlement building in the West Bank.<sup>36</sup>

In its public engagement, APAN utilizes the language of human rights and international law to critique current Israeli policy and Australian government responses to it. APAN's stated objectives reflect its stated commitment to advocacy on the basis of UN resolutions and international and humanitarian law.<sup>37</sup> Such arguments have more influence on governments than purely moral ones. By highlighting Israel's violations of international law, APAN contributed to pressuring the Australian government under Julia Gillard to abstain and not to vote against

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<sup>36</sup> APAN, "Palestine in Crisis", *APAN Website* <http://apan.org.au/palestine-in-crisis/> (July 2013) accessed 5 September 2013.

<sup>37</sup> APAN, "APAN Objectives", *APAN Website* <http://apan.org.au/apan-objectives/> (unknown) accessed 5 September 2013.

statehood in the general assembly in 2012. By highlighting the illegality of Israeli settlement building under international law, APAN was able to highlight Israel's refusal to cooperate in direct negotiations and argue that the General Assembly vote for statehood "should not have been a controversial issue."<sup>38</sup>

APAN's constitution states that Palestinians' have the right to self-determination in a viable and democratic Palestinian state.<sup>39</sup> However, APAN does not propose a concrete political outcome to the conflict; for example APAN makes no judgment on whether the solution should include two states or one bi-national state. APAN is reluctant to propose any definitive solution for two main reasons. As a representative network of organizations, APAN's positions must balance competing views within its membership. Moreover, like most other groups in Australia APAN is wary of speaking for or on behalf of Palestinian peoples. In order to acknowledge the multitude of views within its membership and uphold Palestinian people right to determine the nature of their future homeland, APAN refrains from any determinism in this regard.

Other advocacy, solidarity-activist, or special interest groups utilize human rights arguments or reference Palestinians' human rights in some form. AFOPA's website, for example, states that "it aims to promote peace and justice in Palestine based on international law, and relevant UN resolutions and distributes information about human rights abuses in Palestine."<sup>40</sup> Others run local campaigns based on human rights principles. CJPP is affiliated with Birzeit University's Right to Education Campaign, and calls on local institutions in Sydney to support the campaign.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, AJPP utilizes human rights arguments in its letters to politicians and petitions.

The main difference in the use of human rights and international law principles by advocacy groups and grassroots solidarity-activist groups is the audience and tenor of the arguments. Given the distinct aims of advocacy and solidarity-activist groups, the former use them to remind decision makers of the human rights and international law obligations. The latter, in many cases, use them to lend moral or political weight to public criticisms of Israel. In these circumstances, human rights and international law arguments can lose their meaning in inflammatory and, at times, ideological criticisms.

These kinds of criticisms are not limited to solidarity-activist groups. However, by definition, advocacy groups have to be more restrained and cautious in their public criticism, especially if they seek to build or maintain relationships with decision makers.

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<sup>38</sup> Gregor Henderson, "Effective Pressure is Essential to Broker a Solution", *Sydney Morning Herald Federal Politics Page* <<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/effective-pressure-is-essential-to-broker-a-solution-20121128-2ae72.html>> (29 November 2012) accessed 2 March 2014.

<sup>39</sup> APAN, "APAN Objectives".

<sup>40</sup> Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA), "About AFOPA", *AFOPA Website* <http://www.afopa.com.au/about-afopa/> (unknown) accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine (CJPP), "Right to Education Campaign", *CJPP Website* <http://coalitionforpalestine.org/campaigns/education/> (unknown) accessed 14 September 2013.

Often, these forms of messaging place exclusive focus on blaming Israel rather than explicitly making the case for Palestinian rights and self-determination. Solidarity-activist groups may also use politicized and controversial language without necessarily justifying its use with context, facts and figures, or in-depth explanation. An oft-repeated slogan is “Israel is an apartheid state.” Solidarity-activist groups may also resort to grassroots political action such as public protest, imbued with Socialist or Marxist rhetoric of revolution, and imperialism.

Whilst, these criticisms may reflect realities in the Territories, they do not necessarily provide constructive perspectives to a wider community unfamiliar with the intricacies of the conflict. Such approaches may be liable to accusations of lack of balance and dogmatism, which ultimately affect the credibility of the organization, placing it in the same ‘fringe’ or ‘radical’ space as pro-Israel lobby or media groups. More importantly, they may also affect the credibility of the movement itself. One must note that this kind of criticism is used to varying degrees by organizations.

For example, FOPWA ran a public Al Nakba Commemoration Ceremony in May 2013, during which activists chanted the following the slogan: “Israel out of West Bank, Israel out of Gaza, Israel out of Palestine, long live the intifada.”<sup>42</sup>

Although the sentiment was commensurate with the broad end of goals Palestine civil society groups in Australia, the protest aesthetic combined with the language used was potentially problematic. In this case, through chants such as ‘long live the intifada’, the rally could have been perceived to memorialize and celebrate intifada. This may not have been in the best interest of the group, especially given the opposition both intifadas incurred in the Western press when they happened. As a public, political message without any context or explanation, the only constructive message for an onlooker to take away is that this is was a Pro-Palestinian group. A more nuanced interpretation relied on an onlooker and protestor making conversation with each other.

The second comes from CAIA Melbourne’s BDS campaigns. During one protest inside a local Big W, activists performed a short dialogue in which a ‘security man’ explained to ‘a customer’ why he should not buy Soda Stream. The skit was followed by a public message and chants that “Big W supports ethnic cleansing.”<sup>43</sup> Although the activists attempted to provide some context through the dialogue, the protest did not address why Israeli settlements ‘are illegal’, why Palestinian land ‘was stolen’, and why Israel was ‘engaged in ethnic cleansing.’ The language and form of engagement in this protest, albeit part of a wider activist tactic (BDS), took a strong moral and ideological stance without necessarily engaging the public with context and reasoned debate.

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<sup>42</sup> Friends of Palestine Western Australia (FOPWA), “Video from FOPWA Al Nakba Commemoration”, *FOPWA Website* <http://www.fopwa.org/2013/05/video-from-fopwa-al-nakba-commemoration/> (20 May 2013) accessed 17 October 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), “Video: Bursting the Bubble of Israeli Apartheid – Boycott Soda Stream”, *CAIA Website* <http://ozcoalitionagainstisraeliapartheid.wordpress.com/2013/04/23/video-bursting-the-bubble-of-israeli-apartheid-boycott-soda-stream/> (19 April 2013) accessed 4 August 2013.

This is not to say that there is no place for acts of public protest for the movement in Australia. However, regardless of whether there is a protest aesthetic prototype, protest rallies in Western liberal democracies today are commonly perceived to be unconstructive, aggressive, and even militant. This negative perception of protest politics can be transposed onto the cause being rallied for. The language being used in the rally can add to the negative perception. Such a perception may be magnified when there is limited understanding of the issue being rallied around, and when it does not have any direct bearing on daily life in Australia.

Special interest groups' political messages align final status, human rights, and international law arguments seen elsewhere. However, they are distinguished by fact that they adhere to their constituencies' particular political or ideological languages or forms. This trend is particularly pronounced in the cases of AJDS, IAJV, and PIEN.

For example, PIEN utilizes the language and reasoning of Christian scripture to highlight Palestinian human rights and call for a peaceful end to the occupation. PIEN's work is guided by Kairos Palestine, a document that illuminates the plight of the Palestinians (particularly Palestinian Christians) and addresses Christians around the world.<sup>44</sup> Kairos' website states that:

“We Palestinian Christians declare that the military occupation of our land is a sin against God and humanity, and that any theology that legitimizes the occupation is far from Christian teachings because true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.”<sup>45</sup>

The use of this religious language and reasoning is likely to resonate with Christian communities around the world, lending PIEN's pro-Palestine perspective a level of legitimacy within these communities. This religious discourse is arguably more effective with Christian constituencies than liberal human rights or international law arguments. Other than being imbued with a strong religious rhetoric, PIEN's perspectives on the occupation and the current situation are in sync with APAN and other large civil society groups around the country.

Both AJDS and IAJV offer alternative voices about Israel-Palestine to the Jewish community in Australia. AJDS, for example, aims to counter the dominant “conservative stance taken by many official Jewish organizations in Australia.”<sup>46</sup> AJDS distinguishes between Jews and the policies of the Israeli State, arguing that Jews, given their long history of oppression, should be critical of the Occupation. AJDS reminds Jews of the “disbelief expressed at the indifference of the world to their plight over the last fifty years”,<sup>47</sup> urging them not to ignore similar horrors being

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<sup>44</sup> Kairos Palestine, “Kairos Palestine Homepage”, *Kairos Palestine website* <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/> (unknown) accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS), “About AJDS”, *AJDS Website* <http://www.ajds.org.au/about/> (unknown) accessed 10 November 2013.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

inflicted in the name of Jews today.<sup>48</sup> As Jewish organizations, AJDS and IAJV are both in a unique position to question this dissociative amnesia within the Jewish community in Australia.

APHEDA's position on political issues is similar to that of APAN. APHEDA's website explicitly mentions its opposition to the separation wall as a gross violation of Palestinian human rights.<sup>49</sup>

All advocacy groups are heavily involved in defending pro-Palestinian perspectives in the media and public forums, especially in response to attacks from the Zionist lobbies in Australia. These communiqués usually involve re-articulating the main arguments, refuting charges of anti-semitism<sup>50</sup> or defending the integrity of forums in which the Israeli State's policies have been criticized.<sup>51</sup>

## 2.3 Strategies and Activities

### 2.3.1 Key Points

- Advocacy groups lobby politicians, sanction press releases and interviews, and conduct research on key advocacy issues such as public opinion on Israel-Palestine.
- LFoH and MFoB advocate with local council politicians. The 'sister city' model allows them to develop close human links with people in Palestine.
- Solidarity activist groups organize public rallies, lectures and other public forums, screen films, and in some cases raise funds for projects in Palestine.
- Solidarity activist and special interest groups are at the forefront of the BDS campaign in Australia

### 2.3.2 Key Trends

Advocacy groups' single defining feature is the degree of influence held with key local and national decision makers. APAN visits Parliament House approximately three times a year to lobby federal parliamentarians and members of cabinet. During their visit in late 2012, APAN held meetings with 30 individual politicians and co-hosted a Parliamentary Friends of Palestine event with approximately 50

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> APHEDA, "APHEDA Middle East Projects".

<sup>50</sup> George Browning, "Criticism of Israel is not Anti-Semitic per se", *Online Opinion Website* <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=15044> (24 May 2013) accessed 14 September 2013.

<sup>51</sup> The Australian Newspaper, "ANU off the rails", *The Australian Opinion Page*, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/letters/anu-off-the-rails/story-fn558imw-1226717140615> (12 September 2013) accessed 15 September 2013.

attendees.<sup>52</sup> Being better resourced, advocacy groups are able to conduct research to inform their advocacy initiatives. In 2009, and 2011, APAN, in collaboration with a number of solidarity-activist groups such as CJPP, commissioned Roy Morgan to conduct a public poll about Australian opinions towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Advocacy groups also undertake other activities. As previously mentioned, members write articles, op-eds, and letters to editors. This is the least resource-intensive method of raising awareness in the community. Members of APAN's executive and progressive Jewish community leaders are published most often. APAN, AFOPA LFoH and MFoB also organize film screenings, facilitate speaking tours, and endorse the BDS movement. AFOPA is also involved in development activities, in supporting young Palestinian scholars, and in organizing marquee annual events such as the Edward Said Memorial Lecture.

LFoH and MFoB provide material aid and development assistance to communities in Hebron and Bethlehem. The groups raise funds for places such as the Umm al Khair and Khasem Al Daraj kindergartens. The groups also invite prominent Palestinians from the two West Bank towns to stay in Leichhardt and Marrickville and send members of their local community to Palestine. These forms of engagement with Palestine must be understood as advocacy because they raise awareness and strengthen links between leaders and communities in the two countries. Indeed, all of these initiatives involve local council members and governments in one way or another.

There are a number of core activities common to solidarity-activist groups. These groups organize public meetings, protest rallies, public lectures, and film screenings. 'Rachel', and 'Five Broken Cameras' are two documentaries that have been recently screened across the country whilst rallies are held to commemorate special occasions such as Al Nakba. Students For Palestine have, in the past, organized Palestine Solidarity Week in a number of university campuses in Victoria.<sup>53</sup> These groups also use websites, blogs, and Facebook groups to advertise events, post articles and opinion pieces, and hold large repositories of information about key issues. Activities are aimed at raising awareness within local areas and recruiting new group members.

The majority of solidarity-activist groups are involved in BDS either through direct protest actions against institutions, which sell Israeli (or settler) products, or by raising awareness about the movement through public lectures, flyer distributions, and petitions. For example, the CAIA-Melbourne leads the 'Burst the Bubble' campaign in Victoria. Groups in Sydney are also heavily involved in solidarity actions with University of Sydney academics Jake Lynch and Stuart Rees who have enacted academic boycotts of Israeli institutions.

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<sup>52</sup> APAN, "APAN hosts joint delegations in Canberra", *APAN Website* <http://apan.org.au/apan-hosts-joint-delegation-in-canberra/> (unknown) accessed 16 September 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Students for Palestine (SFP), "SFP Website", *SFP Website* <http://www.students-for-palestine.info/> (unknown) accessed 20 February 2014.



Many solidarity-activist groups are part of APAN, and therefore maintain (indirect) channels of communication with decision makers in Australia.

The majority of special interest groups' activities are identical to those of advocacy and solidarity-activist groups. However, these activities take on additional significance because of these groups' influence within their constituencies. To take one example, when AJDS launched its 'Don't Buy Settlement Products' campaign in early 2013, mainstream Jewish organizations in Australia quickly responded questioning AJDS' inclusion within Australia's Jewish community and urging the group to be "loyal to the acceptable politics of the Jewish community in Australia"<sup>54</sup> AJDS responded through a series of letters published on its website and in Jewish community newsletters explaining BDS as a concept and strategy and questioning the hypocrisy of condemning BDS without condemning the occupation.<sup>55</sup> Such exchanges occur regularly and contribute to broadening the political discourse within the Jewish community in Australia.

In addition, special interest groups engage in a number of unique activities. In 2010, IAJV organized a petition "against the right of return for Jews to Israel."<sup>56</sup> The petition highlights the hypocrisy of sanctioning return to Israel for any Jew around the world while concurrently denying Palestinian refugees right of return to the same territories. The petition was unique because it raised fundamental questions about Palestinian right to what is often claimed to be exclusively Jewish land, by challenging the notion of automatic return for Jews.

Another example is the PCWA starting Australia's first Palestinian football team, Team Palestine, in WA. Sport is an important avenue to build and enhance cultural identity, and the Palestinian Football team is an effective way, not only to bring the WA Palestinian diaspora together, but to bring attention to Palestine's plight in a less politicized manner.

PIEN utilizes its influence within the Sydney's Christian community to raise awareness about the Palestinian cause in local churches and community centres. PIEN uses these community education sessions to highlight the injustices faced by fellow Christians in Palestine, thereby transforming the issue to one of Christian solidarity.

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<sup>54</sup> Jordy Silverstein, "What are the possibilities of Jewish/Palestinian solidarity?", *AJDS Website* <http://www.ajds.org.au/jewishpalestiniansolidarity/> (20 June 2013) accessed 18 January 2014.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> IAJV, "Petition against the right-of-return", *IAJV website* <http://iajv99.wordpress.com/sign-the-declaration/petition-against-the-right-of-return/> (February 2019) accessed 23 September 2013.

### 3. Interview Results and Analysis

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When asked about the main challenges to more effective Palestine-advocacy in Australia, interviewees highlighted a number of issues, which could be organized into four main categories. Respondents also articulated possible solutions to these challenges.

### 3.1 Pro-Israeli policy perspectives within Australia

Respondents said that a major challenge for the movement is the entrenchment of pro-Israel perspective within the Australian state. Respondents noted that the public, the government, and the mainstream media are firmly supportive of pro-Israeli perspectives, and that such support is consistently prompted by an organized and effective pro-Israeli lobby.

Regarding the Australian public, Interviewee 3 said that “opinion is skewed towards Israel, and historically the perspective has always been pro-Israel.”<sup>57</sup> Interviewee 4 noted that the “Australian public is ignorant and even biased towards Israel.”<sup>58</sup>

In assessing claims about public opinion, it is important to note that the Israel-Palestine is a distant conflict of little direct significance to Australians’ daily lives.

However, there is some awareness of the conflict in Australian society. Within this demographic,<sup>59</sup> it is clear that there is a healthy base of support for Palestinian rights and statehood claims. Research shows that there has been a major shift in public opinion towards a more sympathetic view of Palestinians’ plight under occupation and Palestinian statehood over the last 25 years.<sup>60</sup> Successive public polls<sup>61</sup> show that this majority support for Palestinians is enduring, and extends to key final status and international law issues. For example, a 2010 National Survey by Research Now found that 92% of Australians ‘expressed support’ for Palestinian refugees’ right of return and 78% were in favor of ‘Israel withdrawing from settlements constructed on Palestinian land.’ A 2008-2009 Roy Morgan poll found that 51% of Australians thought that Australia should vote “yes” in the UN GA vote for Palestinian Statehood compared to 20% who thought Australia should “abstain” and 15% who thought that Australia should vote “no.” There is evidence from at least one recent poll that 80% of respondents ‘support’ an Australian government policy that calls for negotiations to be based on ‘international law and human rights.’<sup>62</sup>

Thus, evidence suggests that while many Australians are ignorant about the conflict, there are Australians who are informed and in support of stronger rights and self-determinations for Palestinians.

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<sup>57</sup> Interview 3

<sup>58</sup> Interview 4

<sup>59</sup> It is difficult to know what proportion of the population is aware of the key issues, and the depth of their knowledge.

<sup>60</sup> A comparison of two McNair Ingenuity Research polls in 1981 and 2006 illustrates a 6-point increase in sympathy for Palestinians, a 15-point drop in sympathy for Israelis, and a 55-point increase in the number of neutral respondents over 25 years.

<sup>61</sup> Eulalia Han and Halim Rane, *Making Australian Foreign Policy on Israel and Palesine*, (Carlton: Melbourne University Publish, 2013) 105-106.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

Respondents argued that media coverage of the issue does not contribute to informing people about the realities of the conflict. Interviewee 4 noted that public ignorance is perpetuated by “poor coverage of the issue in the media, especially in comparison to the coverage of Zionist/Jewish lobby arguments.”<sup>63</sup> Interviewee 4 also noted that “even ABC has been somewhat biased towards the Israeli state.”<sup>64</sup> Interviewee 10 characterized media coverage of the issue as “hostile” to pro-Palestinian perspectives.<sup>65</sup>

Contrary to respondents’ views on the dearth of media coverage, Han and Rane write that there is healthy coverage of the issue – 2.3 articles per day from 2000 to 2010.<sup>66</sup> However, they agree with respondents’ views about the inherent bias of the coverage, questioning its lack of historical context, international law analysis, and variety in political perspectives.<sup>67</sup> The ideological bend employed by Australian media outlets remains a problem for Palestine advocacy for Australia.

Respondents also stated that it was hard to gain policy traction when “both major parties have been strong supporters of Israel in recent times.”<sup>68</sup> Han and Rane’s argue the major parties’ policies have become increasingly pro-Israel in the last five years.<sup>69</sup> This change is apparent in the way Australia has voted in the General Assembly during this period.<sup>70</sup> Successive recent governments have claimed that key UN Resolutions are ‘aimed at condemning Israel’ and ‘contributing nothing to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.’<sup>71</sup> The current government has explicitly expressed firm support for Israel on numerous occasions. Julie Bishop has questioned the illegality of Israeli settlement building under international law.<sup>72</sup> Most recently Attorney-General Brandis questioned the use of the well-established legal term ‘occupied’ as “neither appropriate nor useful.... judgmental language.”<sup>73</sup>

This is despite the fact that both parties recognize, in principle at least, the two-state solution.<sup>74</sup> In assessing these positions, Han and Rane conclude that:

“Australia’s recent position on Israel-Palestine is at odds with Australia’s commitment to international law, its position as a Western liberal democratic middle power, and its history of support for self-

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<sup>63</sup> Interview 4

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Interview 10

<sup>66</sup> Han and Rane, *Making Australian Foreign Policy*, 76.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 76 – 82.

<sup>68</sup> Interview 4

<sup>69</sup> Han and Rane, *Making Australian Foreign Policy*, 51.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Raphael Ahren, “Australia FM: Don’t call settlements illegal under international law”, *Times of Israel website* < <http://www.timesofisrael.com/australia-fm-dont-call-settlements-illegal-under-international-law/>> (15 January 2014) accessed 2 February 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Australian Associated Press, “Australia drops ‘occupied’ from references to Israeli settlements”, *Guardian Website* <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/05/australia-drops-occupied-israeli-settlements> (5 June 2014) accessed 6 June 2014.

<sup>74</sup> APAN Campaign, “Australian Labor Party Position”, *APAN Campaign Website* <http://apan.good.do/voteforpalestine/pages/alp-position/> (unknown) 10 November 2014

determination for peoples all over the world including in Kosovo and East Timor.”<sup>75</sup>

Successive governments have also been strongly opposed to BDS tactics. Interviewees also picked up on this opposition, noting governments’ “vehement opposition to BDS.”<sup>76</sup>

The strength and efficiency of the Israeli and Zionist lobby is also a key factor in perpetuating pro-Israel perspectives in Australia. Almost all respondents highlighted this factor as a major challenge. Interviewee 1 mentioned “the Israel lobby’s strength and the State’s closeness to the lobby through its embassies.”<sup>77</sup> Interviewee 3 highlighted the lobby’s efficiency, noting that all letters or editorials concerning Israel-Palestine get multiple responses from the lobby.<sup>78</sup> Interviewee 4 seconded Interviewee 3’s point about efficiency but added that the lobby is also very strategic in the way it is able to maintain strong and sustainable connections with cabinet, parliament and the bureaucracy.<sup>79</sup>

A number of respondents offered reasons for why the Israel lobby was so strong. Interviewee 6 put their effectiveness down to three interrelated factors: that they stay close to their community and engage them extensively to social and cultural activities; that they are in it for the long haul and are happy with incremental progress over decades; and that they are always very well prepared in their advocacy.<sup>80</sup> Interviewees 3, 4, and 10 also acknowledged that the Israel lobby had strong links with the Israeli state, and was richly endowed by private wealth, making their extensive efforts possible.<sup>81</sup>

Although the strength and influence of the Israel lobby is undoubted, respondents acknowledged that the lobby has been overreaching in last two to three years, trying to “sell a poor product.”<sup>82</sup> Interviewee 5 also noted that the “[moral] tide is turning”<sup>83</sup> and that it would be harder for the lobby to sustain its current perspective.

In any case, it is to be expected the Israel lobby will always provide counter arguments to the Palestine advocacy movement. Ultimately, the movement has to be able to effectively challenge these efforts to win over some of the terrain that the Israeli lobby has captured over the last few decades.

### **3.2 Ideological and Political Differences**

In addition to the disadvantageous political context, there are significant challenges intrinsic to the movement itself.

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<sup>75</sup> Han and Rane, *Making Australian Foreign Policy*, 55.

<sup>76</sup> Interview 4

<sup>77</sup> Interview 1

<sup>78</sup> Interview 3

<sup>79</sup> Interview 4

<sup>80</sup> Interview 6

<sup>81</sup> Interviews 3, 4, and 10

<sup>82</sup> Interview 6

<sup>83</sup> Interview 5

There are deep-seated divisions in Palestine about what the solution to the conflict should be, and what strategies are most effective. These divisions are reflected in interviewees' responses and illustrate that they are also internalized to some degree within the movement in Australia. Interviewee 6, for example, stated that the "community in Australia is small and fragmented with very strong divisions about the goals and strategies required."<sup>84</sup>

Divisions revolve around the extent to which the PA's current policy pragmatism compromises the aspirations of Palestinians. In other words, by engaging in what many see as an ineffectual and morally corrupt peace process, the PA might have gone too far in marginalizing some of these aspirations and eschewing key strategies such as BDS to realize these aspirations.

With regards to the two-state solution based on 1967 borders, some respondents argued that these parameters obscure significant injustices of the pre-1967 period and effectively rule out a full right of return for Palestinian refugees and members of the diaspora. Interviewee 1 said the PA's critique of Israel

"focuses too heavily on symptoms of the occupation such as settlements, whilst marginalizing equally substantive, but less compromising goals.....[for example] the right of return cannot just be a symbolic goal."<sup>85</sup>

These respondents also questioned why PA representatives advocated boycott of settlements only, when the BDS movement, led by a core of Palestinian civil society in the oPT, called for BDS to encompass all of Israel. Respondents were also critical of the PA for supporting, if not encouraging the West not to recognize Hamas' democratic election victory in 2006.<sup>86</sup> As such there were perceptions amongst some respondents that "the PA does not represent the voice of the diaspora, the refugees, and Gazans."<sup>87</sup>

Other respondents disagreed with such assessments, intimating that to deny the geopolitical realities and power asymmetries in Israel-Palestine is futile.<sup>88</sup> Compromise, this perspective suggests, is an inherent and necessary element of negotiation. Interviewee 2, for example, questioned the value of

"denouncing Israel [and territory captured in 1948] as illegitimate and continuing to place a disproportionate focus on aspirational goals such as the right of return."<sup>89</sup>

Focusing on such goals would alienate Israel further, distract from the core, "commitment to the goal of Statehood,"<sup>90</sup> and thus confuse or weaken the goal of a unified political message.

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<sup>84</sup> Interview 8

<sup>85</sup> Interview 1

<sup>86</sup> Interviews 1 and 3

<sup>87</sup> Interview 1

<sup>88</sup> Interview 2

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

So while some respondents were adamant that the PA was not representative of all Palestinians, others were equally adamant that Palestinians must rally behind the PA as the “only legitimate international representative of the Palestinian people.”<sup>91</sup>

Respondents noted that many in Australia perceive the PA to be ineffective and corrupt actor. Interviewee 6 says that the PA “is regarded as weak, and ineffectual at best and collaborationist at worst; it is also perceived as uninterested in ‘normal people.’<sup>92</sup> Interviewee 7 also notes “many Palestinians and Australians are highly critical of the PA.”<sup>93</sup> Such perceptions, it is argued, make it difficult for some groups to adopt the PA’s message and strategy, further perpetuating divisions in the movement. Consequently, respondents noted that the Delegation’s connection with the PA is very problematic.”<sup>94</sup> Even more so, “the perception amongst activists that APAN is too close to the PA (GDOP) and that it serves a particular political agenda”<sup>95</sup>, further entrenches the aforementioned lack of trust within the movement.

As an aside, Interviewees 1 and 2 noted the influence of Marxist, Socialist, and Anarchist rhetoric in some organizations’ public events, citing the tendency to collapse Israel-Palestine into broader ideological struggles concerning imperialism, neoliberalism, and capitalism.<sup>96</sup>

Political and ideological differences mean that the movement in Australia is fragmented. Groups operate in different factions; cooperation and sharing of resources across these factions is limited. As Interviewee 1 notes, there is “a genuine lack of trust between street advocates and APAN [and other advocacy groups] and a territorial issue about my cause your cause.”<sup>97</sup> Of course, some of these differences relate to individual organizations’ own underpinning ideologies.

### **3.3 Overcoming Ideological and Political Differences**

Respondents did not articulate many concrete measures to bridge deep seated political and ideological differences within the movement.

Respondents stated that groups should show much greater respect for differences in political opinion within the movement.<sup>98</sup> However there is lack of consensus amongst respondents about how such a shift in culture might be achieved.

Key to this disagreement is what the GDOP’s role in the movement, if any, should be. Interviewee 1 stated that the GDOP, in its current form, does not have a constructive role in advocacy.<sup>99</sup> This is mainly because the GDOP is perceived to be an agent of the PA, which is a discredited organization. Interviewee 1 called for a

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Interview 6

<sup>93</sup> Interview 5

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Interview 1

<sup>96</sup> Interviews 1 and 2

<sup>97</sup> Interview 1

<sup>98</sup> Interview 9

<sup>99</sup> Interview 1

“grassroots liberation movement focused on raising awareness centered on the goals and framework of BDS.”<sup>100</sup> The GDOP should keep at arm’s length and focus on its role in promoting Palestinian history and culture.<sup>101</sup>

Other respondents felt that the GDOP should provide leadership in bridging differences between factions and encouraging cooperation in the movement. Interviewee 2 called for the GDOP to adopt a ‘Lighthouse’ model; it could set the advocacy agenda in a non-explicit manner by reiterating the political goals of the Palestinian people and build capacity of groups to contribute to these goals through advocacy with Australian decision makers.<sup>102</sup> Interviewee 10 welcomed the GDOP’s role in providing regular information about the political situation in the oPT and intimated that it was a strategic way to “control the discourse regarding the conflict.”<sup>103</sup> For example, the GDOP could “invite groups to regular learning and development workshops, which would foster relationships, loyalty and knowledge of the issues.”<sup>104</sup>

Interviewee 6 emphasized that in order for the GDOP to carry out this role effectively, it would have to display more awareness and respect for left wing grassroots activists, and communicate with them regularly and directly,<sup>105</sup> and refrain from trying to control them.<sup>106</sup>

The responses above indicate that there is a lack of consistent understanding about GDOP’s role and mandate. It is important to address this issue briefly.

From the involvement of external governments in representing the Palestinian national voice before the 1970s, to the ideological and tactical differences between Fatah-dominated PLO and the Islamist Hamas movement, to the divergent interests of Palestinians living in the oPT and those in the diaspora, the thrust and the dynamics of Palestinian political representation have always been complex.

Nevertheless, key foundational characteristics of this system remain. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) continues to be recognized by the international community as the sole legitimate representative body of *all* Palestinian people – in the oPT and in the diaspora.

The PLO consists of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the Central Council, and the Executive Committee (ExCo). The PNC, composed of 740 members from political parties, civil society, unions, and the diaspora develops the national movement’s overarching framework and agenda, and also formulates policy and guidelines.<sup>107</sup> In theory, the PNC is the equivalent of a Palestinian Parliament and is

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Interview 2

<sup>103</sup> Interview 10

<sup>104</sup> Interview 2

<sup>105</sup> Interview 6

<sup>106</sup> Interview 10

<sup>107</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, “Palestine Liberation Organization”, *KAS Website PDF* [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_2041-1442-1-30.pdf?101018163243](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_2041-1442-1-30.pdf?101018163243) (unknown) accessed 14 September 2014



responsible for electing the ExCo, making changes to its own membership, and changing the Palestinian National Charter and Fundamental Law.<sup>108</sup>The ExCo is a body of leaders elected by the PNC to execute its framework and the policy platform. It is essentially the equivalent of a Palestinian national cabinet, and is responsible for running various government ministries, and managing the national budget.<sup>109</sup>

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the Palestinian Legislative Council, and the brand new Palestinian National Unity Government chequer the political landscape further, making it difficult for an observer to comprehend the mandates, responsibilities, and hierarchies at play. Both PNA and PLC were creations of the Arafat-led, Fatah-dominated PLO, responsible for administrative governance within Area A and B of the West Bank.<sup>110</sup>The PLO ExCo (not the PNA or PLC) is solely responsible for representation at the international level; it establishes PLO Representative offices around the world, and sends diplomats abroad.<sup>111</sup> The GDOP is one of these offices.

Thus, by virtue of being the representative of the PLO in Australia, the GDOP is the official, legitimate representative of *all* Palestinians, to Australia. The head of the GDOP holds the status of (PLO) Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Australia. The GDOP advocates self-determination for Palestinians in line with the PLO's stated goal of a two-state solution based on 1967 borders. Contrary to popular belief, the GDOP reports directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a department under the jurisdiction of the PNC ExCo, and not the PA.

The GDOP does not see a role for itself *within* pro-Palestine civil society in Australia. The GDOP's sole aim in relation to civil society groups is to promote accurate understanding of the PLO and its various departments, its political goals (as stated above), and its activities.

This role and mandate create a profoundly productive space for the GDOP to work with civil society actors seeking to make their advocacy and activism as effective as possible in line with the recognized political goals of the Palestinian people.

### **3.4 Paralysis in the Palestinian and Arab Communities**

Respondents also said that ideological differences extend to the Palestinian community in Australia, contributing to what Interviewee 6 terms, "the lack of a unified Palestinian leadership in Australia."<sup>112</sup> Interviewee 10 also cites "factionalized, and ineffective Palestinian community groups in Australia" as a challenge to more effective advocacy.

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<sup>108</sup> Mazen Masri, "Memo: Distinction between PLO, PA, PNC, PLC", *Al Jazeera Website* <http://transparency.aljazeera.net/en/projects/thepalestinepapers/201218205949656112.html> (5 February 2006) accessed 14 September 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Masri, "Memo: Distinction between PLO, PA, PNC, PLC".

<sup>110</sup> Both organizations were Oslo-era creations of the Arafat-led, Fatah-dominated PLO. The overlaps between the PLO (PNC) and the PNA (PLC) are highly complex in nature and beyond the remit of this paper.

<sup>111</sup> Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, "Palestine Liberation Organization".

<sup>112</sup> Interview 7

Previous research also reflects the disharmony within the diaspora. In a paper on Arab diaspora politics in Australia, Paul Tabar writes that Palestinian Arabs are politically divided along Islamic and nationalist ideological lines reflecting allegiances in their country of origin.<sup>113</sup> These political divisions have paralyzed Palestinian diaspora's unity in advocacy. A report by the Palestinian International Institute<sup>114</sup> notes:

“Personal politics... and petty problems have prevented the formation of a National Palestinian Council which would have overseen all organizational activities. Because there is such a gap...in the form of the absence of a unifying national Palestinian force, there has been a degree of fragmentation within many of these organizations.”<sup>115</sup>

Some respondents noted a related, and potentially broader challenge with regards to the Palestinian and Arab communities in Australia. Interviewee 6 brought up the “lack of interest in the issue from the Palestinian community in Australia.”<sup>116</sup> Interviewee 10 phrased it differently, referring to Palestinian community as “self-focused.”<sup>117</sup>

Interviewee 11 provided a contrary perspective, arguing that some Palestinian groups such as the General Union of Palestinian Workers and the Australian Palestinian Club have been remarkably active within Australia since the mid 1970s.<sup>118</sup> Research also shows evidence of a long history of active Palestinian diaspora politics in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. To provide just one recent example, the Australian Palestinian Cultural League called for mass demonstrations and organized a letter writing campaign during Israel's 2006 incursion of Lebanon.<sup>119</sup> Organizations remain active even today. As Interviewee 11 notes, the Palestinian community is lobbying hard for a resolution in support of Palestinian statehood at the NSW Labor Conference on 26 July 2014.<sup>120</sup> This is part of many efforts by the community to ‘chip away’ at Pro-Israeli perspectives within Australia.<sup>121</sup>

It must be said that much of this advocacy across the Arab diaspora is directed at issues affecting migrants in the host country, and is confined to members within the diaspora.<sup>122</sup> Thus, awareness of these groups' work may be limited outside of the Palestinian diaspora leading to the perception amongst other groups that the Palestinian community is inactive.

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<sup>113</sup> Paul Tabar, “Politics among Arab Migrants in Australia”, *CARIM Research Reports* (September 2009) 15.

<sup>114</sup> The PII is a NFP organization which commissions research on the Palestinian diaspora around the globe

<sup>115</sup> Ali Qazaq, *The Palestinian Community in Australia*, (unkown: The Palestine International Institute, 2008) 21.

<sup>116</sup> Interview 6

<sup>117</sup> Interview 10

<sup>118</sup> Interview 11

<sup>119</sup> Tabar, “Politics among Arab Migrants in Australia”, 15-16.

<sup>120</sup> Interview 11

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Qazaq, *The Palestinian Community*, 21.

When pressed for potential reasons for this lack of political involvement, respondents brought up a number of interesting issues. Interviewee 5, for example, highlighted the damaging effect of dominant stereotypes about Muslims and Islam on such groups' involvement in issues perceived to be overly political or controversial.<sup>123</sup> Other respondents emphasized that when migrants leave home they sometimes prefer to leave political issues tied to their homeland behind. This may be because they do not want to attract attention to themselves or their communities. Or, as one respondent suggested, many Palestinians in the diaspora "feel that Palestine is hopeless."<sup>124</sup> A related effect of the aversion to political causes in the homeland can be a "move away from politics altogether."<sup>125</sup>

Consequently, young second or third generation Palestinian/Arab-Australians who have no connection to Palestine are even more apathetic or averse to being involved. One respondent also noted that many [Palestinian] youth in the West today are simply not educated or well versed in the politics of grassroots activism or civil society activism. They are, he says, "more interested in deconstructing postcolonial narratives."<sup>126</sup> Indeed, another respondent said that neglecting to skill up youth in grassroots activism and taking over the movement's work has been a serious mistake.<sup>127</sup>

The combination of all of these factors places the movement at a significant disadvantage. It means that the only domestic constituency with any direct link to the injustices of Israel-Palestine, and therefore the only Australia constituency with any moral currency is largely silent on the issue.

### **3.5 Overcoming Paralysis in the Palestinian and Arab Communities**

Respondents did not raise many concrete suggestions to overcome the perceived paralysis within the Palestinian community. Solutions may be linked to suggestions to overcome political and ideological differences in the movement; that the GDOP take leadership in fostering unity with the Palestinian community. There are standing proposals to create a unified Palestinian Community Council in Australia.

### **3.6 Lack of Professionalism**

Another key challenge cited by respondents is the lack of professionalism within civil society groups. Interviewee 5 noted "most groups haven't made the transition from grassroots activism to more professionalized advocacy yet."<sup>128</sup> This statement precludes the fact that many organizations do not intend to make that transition and prefer to focus on localized, grassroots, and public protest actions.

However, such organizations should exhibit a base standard of professionalism in

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<sup>123</sup> Interview 6

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Interview 4

<sup>126</sup> Interview 6

<sup>127</sup> Interview 11

<sup>128</sup> Interview 5

the way they operate. Some interviewees felt this operational efficiency was lacking in certain organizations. Said Interviewee 2, “Many organizations have “no objectives, no strategies, and, in some cases, the inability or unwillingness to self-critique.”<sup>129</sup> The same interviewee further noted that this was because there was “very much a resistance mentality and a focus on acts of solidarity which provide “a feel good factor rather than effect any real policy change.”<sup>130</sup>

Others were more measured in their explanations focusing on the structural challenges of emerging civil society, particularly in Australia. Interviewee 11 noted that “Australia is an expensive place, and given that all of the campaign money has come out of activists’ pockets,”<sup>131</sup> sustaining the movement is difficult. Interviewee 5 stressed the lack of financial and human resources for groups to draw upon.<sup>132</sup> Interviewee 6 built on the same theme, highlighting the paucity of available and affordable skilled activists and advocates. Not being able to engage this caliber of human resource means that organizations are forced to take whatever time they can get from whomever is available and interested<sup>133</sup> meaning that there is very little collective responsibility, accountability, and strategic direction in campaigns. Respondent 8 noted that to compete for funding and resources with a growing number of civil society organizations and causes in a tough economic climate is very difficult.<sup>134</sup> This is compounded by the fact that Palestine is such a distant issue for most Australians.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.7 Overcoming Lack of Professionalism

Nevertheless, respondents noted that there are a number of concrete steps that organizations can take to improve their effectiveness and outcomes, whether focused on grassroots activism or professionalized advocacy with decision makers.

Interviewee 2 stated that advocacy groups could be much better at articulating and pushing for “clear outcomes and ‘doable asks’ from government.”<sup>136</sup> These could comprise of concrete actions groups want the government to take in relation to Israel-Palestine in various diplomatic avenues. For example, one demand could be for Australia to change its voting patterns at the UN General Assembly.

Interviewee 3 stated “there is as much money in the Middle Eastern community as the Jewish lobbies.”<sup>137</sup> The key to courting such support is partly to dedicate as many resources as possible to fundraising and to present clear proposals to affect concrete policy changes in Australia.

Interviewee 6 also noted the need for both advocates and wealthy Palestinians to

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<sup>129</sup> Interview 2

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Interview 11

<sup>132</sup> Interview 5

<sup>133</sup> Interview 9

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Interview 8

<sup>136</sup> Interview 2

<sup>137</sup> Interview 3

“court politicians more effectively.”<sup>138</sup> This means that they should “approach politicians when they are in opposition and foster personal connections and relationships over a long period of time.”<sup>139</sup> Long-term relationship building of this nature is likely to bring more favorable voices in parliament over time.

Many respondents stated that the movement “needs a much more diversified advocacy strategy.”<sup>140</sup> This was a key response to the question about how to engage with an ideologically oppositional government. Respondents identified key constituencies – politicians and bureaucrats, the media, academia, and established constituent groups – of such a diversified strategy. Broadening the scope of engagement will ultimately draw in more resources from the community. Diversification is especially pertinent to groups whose primary aim is to lobby decision makers to affect changes in policy.

In relation to the political system, respondents said that the movement should place more emphasis on lobbying key bureaucrats such as human rights lawyers in DFAT and the Attorney General’s Department<sup>141</sup>, individual members’ advisors<sup>142</sup>, and senior departmental managers. These actors see the whole [policy] picture rather than just the political perspective. Interviewees 5 and 10 also emphasized the impact of sending MPs to Palestine to witness the conditions of occupation first hand, but noted the expenses and political groundwork required for this to succeed.<sup>143</sup> Although respondents noted APAN’s work in lobbying parliamentarians, they argued that much more lobbying work needs to be done at the grassroots level through meetings, letter writing, and petitions to local MPs.<sup>144</sup> The ‘sister-cities’ model provides a powerful avenue to advocate with local MPs, particularly on issues – house demolitions, damaged schools and clinics etc. - pertaining to the sister Palestinian city. Many of these issues are replicated across the oPT.

Interviewees 2 and 4 did note that it was crucial to maintain open communication with the current Federal government despite its oppositional position. Interviewee 2 gave the example of the strongly worded, press release on APAN’s website to Julie Bishop’s Sharon funeral visit, to make the point that the movement should refrain from “public attack on politicians because it doesn’t build a discursive and engaged relationship with decision makers.”<sup>145</sup>

Interviewee 7 suggested a more serious campaign to recruit high profile community champions such as Malcolm Fraser, Tim Fischer, or Bob Hawke.<sup>146</sup> Other respondents said that it might be more prudent to seek ‘champions’ outside the formal political system. Respondents noted that there was a misplaced tendency to

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<sup>138</sup> Interview 6

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Interview 4

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Interview 1

<sup>143</sup> Interviews 5 and 10

<sup>144</sup> Interviews 5, 6 and 9

<sup>145</sup> Interview 2

<sup>146</sup> Interview 7

look for ‘Palestine Champions’ in parliament<sup>147</sup> and that even the most vocal Palestine sympathizers in Parliament are “keeping quiet.”<sup>148</sup>

The need to engage more effectively with the media was another issue brought up by respondents. Respondents called for an increase in the volume of engagement through letters of response, editorials, and TV/radio interviews. In order to increase the level and quality of media coverage, Interviewee 6 noted that advocates need to spend more time lobbying editors and journalists both in order to highlight counter-Zionist perspectives and to remind media leaders that they can call upon credible pro-Palestinian voices in Australia.<sup>149</sup> Interviewee 5 noted that it was important to approach alternative forms of media to reach different demographics.<sup>150</sup> Alternatives include local community television and radio, magazines, and Catholic media or parish newsletters.<sup>151</sup>

Respondents stated that it was important to court relevant academics from across Australia.<sup>152</sup> Interviewee 6 highlighted the importance of building relationships with experts in the fields of Middle Eastern Studies and Human Rights.<sup>153</sup> These actors will lend the movement legitimacy and intellectual strength, and may even bring the issue to attention in the university through conferences such as Human Rights in Palestine, held at ANU last year.

Interviewee 1 stressed the importance of paying more attention within academia to the law fare campaign against Stuart Rees and Jake Lynch, for their academic boycott position.<sup>154</sup> She stated that this particular case was important because it gave the struggles an Australian context and therefore had the potential to resonate more strongly.<sup>155</sup>

Respondents also highlighted the need to target established constituent groups more effectively. Interviewee 4 mentioned that the “union movement in Australia is particularly sympathetic to the Palestinian cause”<sup>156</sup> and that this capital must be harnessed. Respondents also noted the importance of the church going community in Australia particularly because “this is a constituency that the current government may listen to.”<sup>157</sup> Respondents acknowledged that PIEN and APAN are currently spearheading work with churches.

Nevertheless, respondents noted that diversification was a key aspect of a more broader professionalization effort required within the advocacy movement. They acknowledged that addressing professionalism would be a long term project<sup>158</sup> and

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<sup>147</sup> Interview 2

<sup>148</sup> Interview 5

<sup>149</sup> Interview 6

<sup>150</sup> Interview 5

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Interviews 4, 6, and 7

<sup>153</sup> Interview 6

<sup>154</sup> Interview 1

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Interview 4

<sup>157</sup> Interview 6

<sup>158</sup> Interview 4

also recognized the inherent 'catch 22' in the process of professionalizing: that it was important to have strategic plans and implement them, but that more resources would be needed in order to do, and that resources can only be garnered with clear strategies and evaluation methods in the first place.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Interview 9

## 4. Summary of Themes and Recommendations

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The last section brings together some of the key themes identified in Part 1 and Part 2 of the paper. Themes are divided into those that are exogenous to the movement or largely beyond its control, and those that are endogenous to the movement or stem from it. Five key recommendations have been included, largely to address the challenges raised in the endogenous themes. These recommendations reflect some of the solutions proposed by interviewees, but are by no means exhaustive in defining the possibilities for action.

## **4.1 Exogenous Themes**

### ***4.1.1 The Extent of Pro-Israeli Perspectives in Australia***

The interviews showed that the movement perceives pro-Israeli tendencies within the Australian state, propped up by a well-organized and efficient Jewish Lobby, to be a significant obstacle to pro-Palestinian political and policy outcomes. These perceptions are tempered by evidence from polls and research, which show that pro-Israeli perspectives may be overstated and that there is also significant support for the end to the occupation and Palestinian statehood, particularly from the public. This shift reflects changes in public opinion across the globe.

Respondents recognized that there was no way to silence Israel Lobby. It was agreed that the movement has to be more proactive and vocal in countering the dominant pro-Israel perspectives, particularly in the media. This proactiveness is synonymous with the need for more professionalism within the movement, a point addressed below.

### ***4.1.2 Structural Diversity: Advocacy and Activism***

Both the Part 1 and Part 2 illustrate the level of diversity within the small Palestine civil society movement in Australia. To an extent, this diversity is natural and inevitable within any civil society movement, as is illustrated in the section 'Conceptualizing Advocacy: An Overview.' Both Norris and George illustrate that cause-oriented politics is inherently diverse. Actors within cause-oriented political movements may have the same overarching goals or aspirations. However, their modes of operating, capacities, and influence differ markedly.

Within the Palestine civil society movement in Australia, professionalized advocacy and lobby bodies co-exist with grassroots community led solidarity-activist groups. Groups also emanate out of specific political constituencies such as the churches or the unions. As Part 1 shows, these groups differ significantly from each other. Part 1 also shows that these groups have key strengths and weaknesses. There is a distinct place and function for them within the movement.

It is important that actors within the movement understand the nature of this diversity and recognize the distinct roles that different kinds of groups play.

## **4.2 Endogenous Themes**

### ***4.2.1 Political Messages and Ideological Differences***

Part 1 highlights two key themes. First, the majority of groups utilize rights and international law arguments to articulate their stances on the issues. Second, although most groups in the movement are interested in similar outcomes – the end to the occupation for example – the language, style and aesthetics accompanying the messaging is indicative of the particular group’s approach and intended audience. Part 1 illustrated some of these differences and the problems associated with them.

In addition, both Part 1 and Part 2 highlight that while all groups aspire to a fair and just resolution to the conflict, the nuances of this resolution remain up for debate. For example, groups disagree on whether there should be a one or two state solution in the region. As respondents note, such disagreements are related to philosophical differences in how to reconcile idealism and pragmatism, ideological splits and factionalism which reflects in political realities in the oPt. As is stated by interviewees, these differences divide the movement and the Palestinian diaspora in Australia.

Interviewees in Part 2 stated the need for much greater respect within the movement and for the GDOP to clarify its role and contribute constructively to unifying the movement.

#### ***4.2.2 The Lack of Professionalism***

The interviews in Part 2, in particular, highlight a perceived lack of professionalism within the movement. Interviewees put this lack of professionalism down to two inter-related factors. The first is the fact that it was difficult to build a mass movement or an efficient lobbying body without significant financial or human resources. Such resources are hard to acquire in a difficult economic environment, especially on an issue as distant to Australians as Palestine. The second is more squarely aimed at members of the movement and relates to the lack of “objectives, strategies, and an unwillingness to self-critique.”

Interviewees brought up a raft of different measures to overcome this perceived lack of professionalism. These are discussed in the section entitled ‘Overcoming Lack of Professionalism.’

### **4.3 Recommendations**

The following six recommendations relate to the key themes and issues raised in this report. They are focused trying to overcome some of the core challenges that currently plague the movement. The author is well aware that the proposed initiatives are inter-twined and that some may not be possible without the completion of others, or may not be possible at all in the next year or even longer. The recommendations reflect, in part, some of the proposals raised by interviewees.

#### ***4.3.1 Recommendations to the Australian-Palestinian Community***

- A. The Palestinian community must develop coherent and effective leadership in order to play a role in advocacy. This paper recommends the creation of a unified Palestinian political diaspora organization in Australia. The creation of

a single organization is particularly important in light of new-found unity between Palestinian factions in Palestine. Such a body must be based on ideological compromise and focus on practical political lobbying and advocacy goals. Such a body will provide an official voice to the diaspora, lend enormous political and moral weight to existing efforts, and have greater currency with Arab, Muslim, and other potentially sympathetic constituencies in Australia.

#### **4.3.2 Recommendations to Australian Civil Society**

This paper recommends:

- B. that civil society organizations be encouraged to examine the need for organizational and political capacity building activities to more effectively achieve their goals.
- C. that the more influential advocacy organizations develop comprehensive 5 to 10 year plans encompassing key goals, advocacy strategies (e.g. how to better engage media or link up with unions), fundraising strategies, and projected budgets in order to create further clarity of purpose and a realistic understanding of organizational capacity in relation to resources. Plans should be transparent and shared with interested stakeholders as an effective fundraising approach.
- D. that research be commissioned into other successful advocacy & activist campaigns, and lobbies so as to garner key lessons for success within an Australian context. It may be most useful to investigate other diaspora political movements such as the ongoing Jewish and Tamil diaspora political campaigns. This can be done through collaboration with university researchers, graduate students, or interns.
- E. that members of the movement and/or the GDOP to investigate more closely the efficacy of the sister cities model and its potential to be replicated in other councils around Australia. The benefits of such a model are outlined in Part 1 and 2, and similar local government authority (LGA) initiatives exist within the refugee movement as well.<sup>160</sup>

#### **4.3.3 Recommendations to the GDOP**

This paper recommends:

- F. that the GDOP clarifies its the role and mandate in Australia and in relation to Australian civil society through the development of an internal policy defining the organizational remit of the GDOP.

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<sup>160</sup> The Refugee Council of Australia's 'Refugee Welcome Zone' model is an appropriate example of a successful LGA initiative, through which Australians in over 90 LGAs host refugees, raise awareness on refugee and asylum seeker issues, and advocate with state governments to changes in policy.

- G. that the GDOP provides accurate information on the PLO's political goals, approaches to advocacy (e.g. international law), policies and actions through GDOP publications (e.g. website or regular information updates) and activities (e.g. consultations, briefings, or workshops)
- H. that the GDOP expands and strengthens its relationships with Australian civil society organizations by exploring pathways for further cooperation where roles and mandates align

## 5. Appendices

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## 5.1 List of Groups

Name of Group	Location	Classification
Australia Palestine Advocacy Network	National	Advocacy
Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA)	Adelaide	Advocacy
Australian Arabic Palestinian Support Association (AAPSA)	NSW	Special Interest
Australian Palestinian Professionals Association (APPA)	NSW	Advocacy
Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine (CJPP)	Sydney	Solidarity-Activist
Australians for Palestine	Melbourne	Solidarity-Activist
Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine (AJPP)	Canberra	Solidarity-Activist
Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS)	Melbourne	Special Interest
Independent Australian Jewish Voices (IAJV)	Sydney	Special Interest
Justice for Palestine	Melbourne	Solidarity-Activist
Just Peace	Brisbane	Solidarity-Activist
Leichhardt Friends of Hebron (LFoH)	Leichhardt, Sydney	Advocacy
Marrickville Friends of Bethlehem (MFoB)	Marrickville, Sydney	Advocacy
Students for Palestine	Melbourne	Solidarity-Activist
Friends of Palestine Western Australia	Perth	Solidarity-Activist
Justice for Palestine Matters (JFPM)	Sydney	Solidarity-Activist
Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid – Melbourne (CAIA-Melbourne)	Melbourne	Solidarity Activist
Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network (PIEN)	National	Special Interest
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	Melbourne	Solidarity-Activist
Doctors for Palestine	Adelaide	Special Interest
Byron Friends of Palestine	Byron Bay	Solidarity-Activist
Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA	NSW	Special Interest
Palestinian Community of Western Australia Inc. (PCOWA)	Perth	Special Interest
Palestinian and Jewish Unity	Brisbane	Solidarity-Activist
Palestinian Community Association of Victoria (PCAV)	Melbourne	Special Interest
Council of Australian Palestinians	Sydney	Special Interest

General Union of Palestinian Workers	Sydney	Special Interest
Australian Palestinian Club	Sydney	Special Interest

## 5.2 Interviews

### 5.2.1 Interview 1

#### Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Questionnaire 1 February 2014

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- The PA's Weaknesses:
  - The PA does not represent all Palestinians – it doesn't represent “the voice of the diaspora, the refugees, Gazans.” It doesn't make enough of an effort to represent these groups – there is not enough outreach work with the diaspora.
  - The PA's critique of Israel focuses too heavily on “symptoms such as settlements” – the right of return cannot just be a symbolic goal.
  - The PA's position on BDS is different from many grassroots activists' position. The PA calls for partial boycott.
  - The PA's (and Delegation's) two state solution does not resonate with Palestinian civil society in Palestine. There is no agreement in what the solution should be and how to get there.
- What is the delegation's position? Is it a diplomatic representative of the PA or an advocacy group for liberation?
- Hamas has been marginalized. The 2006 Hamas election was not recognized in the West. It was boycotted upon the advice of the PA and Mahmoud Abbas.
- There is a genuine lack of trust between street advocates and APAN and a “territorial issue” about “my cause your cause”.
- How seriously have the BDS movement's three core demands been taken?
- The Israeli lobby's strength; the way Israeli State harnesses the lobbies and supports them
- Canada vs Australia:
  - There is much more media coverage of the issue in Australia
  - However, there is a huge distance from the issue. Australia is very isolated from the action (speakers, academics)
  - The movement is too enamored by international speakers/experts who apparently “add legitimacy”. Palestinians can and should tell their story.
  - In Australia there are many factionalized groups (Marxist, Socialist, Anarchist). These groups bring speakers who ascribe to their ideology or link the issue to broader ideological struggles. There is also a level of hot-headedness which leads to unhelpful language

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- First, we need to struggle for liberation. We need to insist on equality for Palestinians in Israel; right of return – In any case, one state has existed for decades.
- We need a civil rights focused advocacy movement, where representation has to be earned from the people. The focus should not be on international diplomacy – what has this yielded? What we need is a grassroots liberation movement focused on raising awareness centred on the goals and framework of BDS (which calls for very concrete actions)
- A cause is best represented by a wide variety of groups doing a wide variety of things – each organization has its own role (activism, solidarity, lobbying) – have to allow for that diversity and understanding in the different approaches
- The PLO needs to separate itself from the PA, which is a weak and illegitimate authority.

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- We need to strengthen the civil rights movement and the language used
- The movement needs stronger engagement with mainstream media and needs to think carefully about simpler/clear messages to the government.

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

- We can look at how the movement has managed to raise awareness in Europe to the point where governments (eg Norway) are forcing sanctions on Israel.
- We need to raise more attention on the academic boycott of Rees/Jake Lynch. This particular episode makes the issue an Australian one
- BDS provides an opportunity to open up conversations with all kinds of different groups – anyone in any group/constituency can participate:
  - Doctors/professionals/unions
  - Church groups
  - Students

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- The Delegation does not have a constructive role in advocacy. The PA (Delegation) has been seen by activists to be too close to APAN; APAN was thus seen to have a specific political agenda. The Delegation should keep at arm's length and clarify its role. If it is a PA office, then it cannot get involved in political advocacy. Its role in promoting Palestinian history and culture is important.
- The Palestinian community is also divided between Hamas and Fatah, which is not helpful to a united advocacy movement.



## 5.2.2 Interview 2

### Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Questionnaire 2 February 2014

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

There are two main challenges:

Ideological/Political impasse

- Groups are stuck in ideological battles about what the solution *should* be (one-state or two-state; right of return etc) . They also have a disproportionate focus on aspirational goals such as the right of return. They also see Israel as illegitimate.
- As such many of them don't recognize the PA as the legitimate international representative. There is a lack of commitment to the goal of 'Statehood' – a disjoint between solidarity groups and the Palestinian political agenda.

Organizational Problems

- There is a very much a 'resistance mentality' and a 'focus on acts of solidarity which provide a feel good factor'
- Lack of professionalism
  - No organization, objectives, strategies, and importantly the inability or unwillingness to self-critique
- What is needed is a realistic, believable agenda, a plan, and more funding

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- The movement needs to commit to a single goal:
  - Statehood + the two state solution
  - It needs to ask more strongly for outcomes and 'doable asks' from the government. Awareness needs to be embodied in action
  - This approach will allow it take advantage of support and opportunities when they arise. For example, when a prominent Palestinian businessman promised \$25,000 for a Newspaper Ad, APAN couldn't agree on the language. This cannot happen, particularly, when the movement is not well endowed financially.
- Groups need to be able to self-evaluate and have a greater willingness to learn. There is a mindset issue where others are blamed and there is no introspection. Ultimately, this will make it easier to seek funding and professionalize

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- There needs to be a move to broaden the scope of advocacy
  - Multifaceted, sectorally targeted approach

- DFAT relationship
- Parliamentary groups
- Individual members
- Bureaucracy
- Directly to the public through public education
- Media campaign and strategy (incl. social media such as twitter)
- There needs to be an approach which includes both engagement with government (ministers, bureaucracy, DFAT, local member) and simultaneous public critique of their policies. However, regardless of the government's position, one cannot afford to alienate it. For example, APAN's response to Julie Bishop's attendance was inadequate and misguided. Such public attack doesn't build a discursive and engaged relationship with decision makers
- There is a tendency to look at "Palestine Champions" in parliament rather than the local member who is directly accountable to the vote/public

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

East Timor:

- Clear, singular political goal following on from East Timorese people's aspirations
- Visible public patrons
- Made it a visible, everyday issue
- Played on the issue of what Australia was doing internationally

NDIS:

- Sectoral unity and lobbied at all levels of the state in myriad ways (summits, high profile advocates, individual stories)

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- In the past, advocacy groups would be consulted with a view to cooperate on goals/strategies/plan of action – but no more, APAN is now independent
- The GDOP needs to follow the Lighthouse Model:
  - This amounts to a non-explicit agenda setting and capacity building relationship. The delegation can take leadership and set the agenda. The idea is to get them to understand the political agenda of the Palestinians without forcing them into anything. It would still build goodwill but also allow the delegation to drive the campaign
  - The GDOP invite solidarity groups to 'learning/development' workshops, which would foster relationships, loyalty, and knowledge of the issues.

**5.2.3 Interview 3**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Questionnaire 3**  
**February 2014**

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- There is well funded and resourced Israel lobby. For example, letters always get multiple responses.
- Australian public opinion is skewed towards Israel. Historically, the perspective has always been pro-Israel.
- The Movement is very diverse. This is both a strength and a drawback
  - Different ideologies, allegiances, histories
  - One-state, two-state, Fatah
  - There is the capacity to speak to Australians from all different walks of life and gain currency with a much wider constituency,
  - However connections within the community are much less potent. Jewish people are more invested in Israel; many Palestinians are not interested in being active

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- There is as much money in the Middle Eastern community as the Jewish Lobby.
- There aren't enough professional, full time staff, and resources.
- The movement needs to keep talking with each other. An annual gathering is a positive thing.

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- The movement needs to make different arguments. These should focus on:
  - Australia's national interests – trade with the Middle East
  - Current Liberal Government has strong ideological affinity to Israel
  - Looking to speak to others who might have influence on the government – who are the other voices in the system that might be useful?

Note: the interviewee chose not to answer the last two questions.

**5.2.4 Interview 4**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Questionnaire 4**  
**March 2014**

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- There is lack of clarity on the solution, but also need to broadcast explanations of why proposed solutions aren't working.
- There is poor coverage of the issue in the media, particularly in the Murdoch press, especially in comparison to the Zionist/Jewish lobby; even the ABC has been somewhat biased towards the Israeli State.
- The Australian public is ignorant and even biased towards Israel
- Both major parties have been strong supporters of Israel and vehemently opposed to BDS
- **Why the inherent bias?**
  - The Jewish lobby is very effective and very well funded; it is also very strategic and able to speak to different actors (govt; bureaucracy). There are also a number of prominent Jews in parliament.
  - Maybe there is a residual feeling of guilt, which excuses Israel; the anti-semitism argument also has currency
  - On a related note, Palestinians and Arabs are not as active on the issue – diaspora tend to “move away from politics” – there is only one Muslim member of Parliament

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- The movement needs a long-term approach. It will take five to ten years to increase the capacity of the movement's voice. It also needs more members, both Australian groups and Palestinian/Arab involvement.
- The tide is turning:
  - Settlements are widely understood to be illegal and we need to capitalize on this
  - We need much more awareness-raising
  - Both the GDOP and lobbyists need a more effective public relations expert
  - The movement needs a much more diversified strategy. We should speak to human rights lawyers in DFAT and AGs
  - We also need to harness a much bigger cohort of academics
- We need to approach different constituencies
  - Unions are very sympathetic to the Palestinian cause

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- We need to keep presenting rational arguments to the government and the cabinet. It is even more important to keep making a fuss and be a nuisance.
- We need to work harder on Christian groups. This is a constituency that the government may listen to. The movement needs to have much more face-to-face contact with constituencies at a grassroots level. It has to make sure representatives attend conferences and public events
- The level of media engagement has to grow. We need more editorials, need to get on TV/radio as much as possible; always respond to coverage

- Human Rights in Palestine<sup>161</sup> was positive but didn't have that much of an impact on the broader community because it was preaching to the converted.

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

- We need to investigate Israeli-Australian defense ties (technology and intelligence)
- Study the green lobby on environmental issues. Examples may include the
  - Sea Shepherd campaign. Its PR effect is immeasurable
- Refugee Issue
  - Look back to the 1970s and 1980s. How can we replicate that kind of bipartisan support?
  - Human stories from refugees are very important. We need Palestinians in Australia to tell their stories

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours?**

- The GDOP should employ a dedicated PR person if possible.
- Regular communication to civil society groups is very beneficial.

**5.2.5 Interview 5**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Questionnaire 5**  
**March 2014**

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- Australians are not very political people.
- Advocacy groups are small and under resourced. People are time-poor and those who do have time seem to be lacking skills. There are no admin staff or even interns and volunteers to run the campaign
- People generally work long hours
- Narrow media ownership breeds ignorance. Despite this, more than 50% of Australians are generally sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. We need more surveys.
- Many groups haven't made the transition from grassroots activism to more professionalized advocacy

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

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<sup>161</sup> Human Rights in Palestine was a conference organized at the Australian National University in September 2013. Papers focused on human rights issues and violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

- We need paid employees with skills and time.
- We need to broaden the way we work from direct to indirect advocacy; include cultural/social events fair trade stalls, which are not directly political and less confronting.

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- Even Palestine sympathizers such as Sussan Ley are keeping quiet.
- The recent Four Corners documentary did succeed in bringing a negative limelight on the government's policy. We need more hard-hitting investigative journalism.
- Getting people to Palestine and on the ground is very effective and powerful.
- We need to make use of community media that speaks to different constituencies
  - Community television and radio
  - Catholic media – parish newspapers
- We need to keep speaking with parliamentarians and bureaucrats who are willing to listen
- We need to court demographics in certain swing/marginal seats – target ones where there is a liberal leaning on by his/her teeth
- We need to better utilize the Church to speak to our conservative leadership
- We need to emphasise the perils of being on the wrong side of history. Reference apartheid

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

There are clear links with other similar struggles, which requires further exploration: These include:

- West Papua – note our government was actually complicit in the occupation.
- Tibet, where our government is fully supportive of the minority group.
- Western Sahara.
- We have lost ground with Aboriginal People while Israel has been building very strong links. Israel built an indigenous language center in Dubbo.
  - Young indigenous activists do not know about Palestine
  - We need to make better use of the National Indigenous. Times and Kurri Mail. Let's use examples like "intervention as land grab" to draw parallels.
- Invite leaders of these communities + indigenous church leaders – ambassador would need to reach out.

What can work:

- Private prosecutions in the UK against Israeli leaders were very effective in delegitimizing them. We need knowledge of who is coming to Australia and why.
- The Public Education Campaign
  - Getting parents on our side; actually convinced parents of private school kids.
  - The campaign eminent persons in Australia to support the cause
  - There was a huge letter writing and petition campaign.
- BDS
  - Even campaign for accurate labeling of certain goods, which is protected under international law.
- Lawfare can be very effective but is also very expensive.
- Charity as advocacy (eg. Leichhardt Friends of Hebron) has been very successful; campaigns are less overtly politicized but still raise very important political issues. We need to frame the issue in the right way.

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- The Delegation's connection with the PA is very problematic. The PA is clearly not well respected. Many Palestinians and Australians are highly critical.
- The Delegation has erred on the side of caution in terms of BDS.
- The Delegation needs to be more media savvy. It must:
  - choose words much more carefully.
  - issue press releases more often – target Fairfax, community media, and local media in regional areas.

**5.2.6 Interview 6**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Questionnaire 6**  
**March 2014**

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

Capacity:

- There are limited financial/human resources.
- There is a lack of interest from the Palestinian community in Australia. What does this mean?
  - There is lack of leadership and culture of demoralization or defeatism.
  - There is a lack of direction from Ramallah. The PA might be clear about its approach and policy but it isn't necessarily communicating it clearly.
  - For example the PA has called for a boycott of settlements, but there is no clear policy on BDS or real action at the UN. The current strategy,

which is premised on negotiation with international powers isn't proving hugely successful and there doesn't seem to be an alternative approach. We need to be reaching out to the grassroots groups/activists and public engagement

- Palestinian youth are more interested in deconstructing postcolonial narratives and not in direct advocacy.

Constituency:

- Strength and persistence of the Israeli Lobby is a factor.
- There are too many damaging stereotypes in play. Some of these are:
  - Arabs as terrorists/extremists particularly in relation to Hamas
  - Stereotype of the Middle East inherently violent and therefore a lost cause
- To take an example from the "I Support Palestine and I Vote" campaign. APAN tried to engage Western Sydney at mosques during Ramadan. It was clear that many Palestinian-Australians feel Palestine is hopeless. Australian-Arabs do not feel ownership or stake in the Australian political process.

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- We need to get the grassroots mobilized and challenge local media; this needs to go beyond the postcolonial orientalist discourse and social media. We need to engage with local constituencies.
- We need clearer leadership from Ramallah on key policy issues.
- There needs to be more engagement with Australian-Palestinian youth from a very young age. Youngsters need to be taught about their heritage and be proud.
- We need a 5-pronged engagement strategy:
  - There is much more work to be done with editors and journalists. Advocates need to develop relationships and highlight that they are credible sources of alternative perspectives.
  - The movement needs to further nurture the Christian bond. The movement needs more Australian-Christians to spread the word within Churches; there needs to be more discussion and stronger language.
  - The movement needs to develop stronger relationships with lecturers of Middle Eastern Studies & Human Rights.
  - The union movement is a key constituency. The movement needs to engage with willing unions and pass resolutions on BDS and settlements. Time and resources are needed for this.
  - There is lots of lobbying in Canberra, but none at the local level:
    - We need to approach local Politicians more regularly.
    - Wealthy Palestinians need to court politicians more effectively. Approach them when they are in opposition and build relationships and personal connections.

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**



- Focus on settlements because its so hard for the other side to explain, but a good way to wedge Labor against Liberals.
- Hamas is toxic in Australia, but they get support from Palestinians because of disillusionment w/ the peace process.
- Australia is isolated in its approach to settlements; even US sees them as illegitimate – ask whether this is in the national interest?
- Target back bencers with large Arab populations. Don't confine ourselves to any political party.
- Mobilize pro-Palestinian constituencies in the lead up to the next election.

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

- Israel Lobby
  - They sell a poor product very well.
  - They stay close to their community and engage them extensively
  - They are in it for the long haul and incremental progress through building relationships over time.
  - They are always very clear and very well prepared.
  - The Israeli lobbies and government have a close relationship. We must develop a close relationship with Palestinian Delegation and not contradict each other publicly. To do this, we need better communication and direction from Ramallah

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- The PA is regarded as weak, ineffectual at best, corrupt and collaborationist at worst; it is perceived as uninterested in normal people.
- The movement needs to facilitate greater relationships with advocates in Palestine.
- We need to raise the GDOP's profile in Australia. Most vocal advocates on Palestine issues are very anti-PA. Many people are unaware that there is even a delegation.
- There needs to be more awareness, communication, and respect for Left Wing grassroots activists.

**5.2.7 Interview 7**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Interview 7**  
**March 2014**

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- The first is the negative image of the Palestinian leadership and community. This is a result of:

- Conflict between Hamas and Fatah
- Divisions and corruption within the PA
- But have reluctance to deal with “Islamist” movement
- No “unified Palestinian leadership”
- The second is the effectiveness of the Jewish lobby:
  - The lobby is well organized and has a strong presence in the media.
  - They lobby has overreached in the last 2-3 years.

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- The factor of time will take its course
  - Israeli occupation and injustices are much more visible now
    - Int’l opinion is shifting. Europe has taken a strong stance against settlement building. Kerry’s recent statements show that the American leadership also has a more nuanced view on the conflict.
    - The Palestine advocacy movement needs to keep emphasizing ongoing injustices, petty harassment, and settlements.
- APAN is a positive development. It needs to grow.
  - It is professional and moderate.
  - Nevertheless, APAN is not entirely representative of the movement. For example, Australians for Palestine (AFP) is not a member.
    - This is partly because of the division over what the final solution should be (two state vs one state)
- There are important gaps in the movement at present:
  - The movement needs to court more active support from the academic community
  - It needs to develop relationships with ‘alternative’ Jewish groups and take more advocates such as Peter Slezak to the government
  - It needs to get more Arab and Muslim groups involved. A key challenge is that many Arabs and Muslims are anxious about racism so won’t enter into political discourse. But the grand Mufti was very involved in the marginal seats campaign; a positive sign.
  - More MPs need to visit Palestine.

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government’s perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- We need different approaches. But what these approaches should be is a difficult question to answer.
- Int’l law perspectives are very important
- Getting different views out in the media
- The movement needs stronger personal relations with the State – with ministers; with chief advisors because they see the whole picture rather than just the political perspective; senior public servants.
- We need to find community champions. Potential candidates could be Malcolm Fraser, Tim Fischer, Bob Hawke, or even Joe Hockey

- The Nationals are very interested in economic interest arguments and can be convinced on this front.

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

- BDS and success of the anti-apartheid movement (government boycotts; sporting boycotts)
  - Scares the Israeli government witless
  - BDS will grow considerably in 5 to 10 years.
  - Need to learn from the BDS – currently having great influence in Europe
- There are definitely parallels to Aboriginal injustice

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- There needs to be a strong relationship between APAN and delegation. We should meet twice a year and be quite transparent, but recognize that they are different organizations with different mandates. It is important to note that nobody in the government or bureaucracy sees any blurring in the relationship.
- We need to somehow formalize and regularize the relationship.

**5.2.8 Interview 8**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Interview 8**  
**March 2014**

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- Palestine is not a core issue for the public in Australia. Hence, it is not a priority for leaders. This reality limits the movement's ability because the potential for leverage is limited. The movement needs to develop realistic goals and strategies.
- The community is small and fragmented. There are very strong divisions about the goals and strategies. Moreover, many people do not like the PA's approach and arguments.

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- We need a long term focus.
- The youth demographic is not a good use of the delegation's time. The GDOP shouldn't be engaging communities too closely because such activity is then labeled pro-PA. Is this really the role of the delegation?

- Arab communities and leaders may not be the closest friends of Palestine. The movement needs to look at other actors (Europe)
  - The GDOP should build relations with French embassy, Greece, South America
  - Focusing solely on Muslim leaders and communities gives fuel to counter-arguments (anti-semitism)
- We need to ask whether Australia is a key policy maker internationally and recognize that Australian FP is influenced by the US
  - A key strategy could be to amplify any message we want to send the US, locally.

**How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- We need to make our voices heard regardless of whether they listen.
  - The grassroots level is very important. We need to engage with MPs in their local constituencies.
  - We have to engage the mainstream local population. MPs will only act when they see 'normal locals' in their offices.

**Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

- It would be useful to look at how public opinion on East Timor in Australia shifted.
- It would be interesting to know what Australia's position during the Irish civil war was.
- Churches represent the mainstream and we should tap into that demographic more aggressively.
- BDS is working. It was effective in RSA; I acknowledge that it is a negative approach.
- There needs to be clarity on the GDOP's position on BDS.

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- The GDOP needs to improve its image. It needs to be seen to be supporting all Palestinians including diaspora and refugees. What is the PA doing to advocate for refugees in Yarmouk and Lebanon, many of whom have relations with the diaspora in Australia?
- If the PA is not interested in all Palestinians, don't expect non-West Bank Palestinians to be engaged

**5.2.9 Interview 9**

**Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Interview 9**

## March 2014

### **What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

- The lack of resources impedes our capacity to achieve our goals
  - We are competing for funding with so many different causes and charities in a difficult economic climate.
  - We have struggled to find people. Volunteers need to have time and requisite skills.

### **How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

- There is a Catch 22 in play here. It is imperative to have strategic plans and implement them. However, in order to do this, one needs adequate resources. But the only way to get more resources is to professionalize; to develop clear goals and plans to implement them.
- We are trying to focus on younger people, on graduates with fewer commitments and financial challenges. This is useful especially with logistical, administrative, and technological tasks.

### **How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

- We need to have both a grassroots movement and direct lobbying
  - More should be done with BDS. It can be very effective especially given the successes in Europe and the USA
  - We need to have some find of legal infrastructure – sympathetic lawyers and funding – in order to repel legal challenges.

### **Are there approaches or strategies from movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement?**

- Our biggest lessons can be taken from the Israeli lobby. The comparison is somewhat unfair, but we can learn from their strategies and apply them to our cause

### **What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

- The GDOP is doing great work.
  - We need more regular meetings w/ advocacy groups
  - The GDOP needs to accept and respect political differences within the movement.
  - We need to expedite the process of a Palestinian Council in Australia. The GDOP is in a good position to do this because it has good relations with all.

## **5.2.10 Interview 10**

### **Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Interview 10** **March 2014**

#### **What do you see as the main challenges to effective Palestine-related advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, professionalism)**

In my view the advocacy for Palestine in Australia has improved over the last few years and the formation of APAN as a wide base network has had a positive impact on advocacy for Palestine. Monetary and human resources still remain our biggest challenge in Australia.

Other challenges:

- Vast country and dispersed population;
- Factionalized, in-effective and self-focussed Palestinian/Arab/Muslim community groups in Australia;
- Hostile media and effective Zionist lobby;
- Making BDS palatable to main stream Australian organisations;
- In-consistent and in-effective communication from the PA to advocacy groups leading to uncoordinated strategies.

#### **How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

By supporting the only effective national advocacy group, APAN. The network has a wide range of constituencies spanning churches, unions, communities and activist groups;

- For the PA to change its approach and to more effectively engage with advocacy groups rather than try and control them;
- To find reliable and continued financial support to continue the work.

#### **How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine? (arguments, strategies, actions)**

Three strategies will in my view be effective:

- Highlight the inconsistency between the government stands with international law and UN resolutions;
- Highlight the damage that these stands (especially on illegality of the settlements and the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention) have on the prospect for peace in the ME and how inconsistent these stands are with those of the US on this issue;
- Highlight the Palestinian human rights and how these stands ignore those rights.

Approach:

- Direct lobbying of government and providing politicians with information;

- Exposing the government stands and policies in the media;
- Maintaining the links with the opposition and encourage them to maintain their publicly declared position when it comes to the conflict;
- Arrange study trips to occupied Palestine for politicians and media personnel;
- Increase BDS activities and challenge the government stand on the issue.

**Are there approaches or strategies from advocacy movements on other issues in Australia that might be useful to the Palestine advocacy movement to take example from? Can you give examples?**

Not that I can think of.

Some note the Zionist lobby and its effectiveness. But my reading of their activities shows that there are plethora of organisations and views and only very few are effective.

They are well funded and can afford dedicated staff which also benefits from Israeli government (Hasbara) propaganda and strategies. Also their influence stems from substantial donations from wealthy individuals during elections.

**What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia?**

GDOP is doing a good job in disseminating information and in providing the diplomatic relationship required as part of its mandate. The separation between Australian advocacy groups and GDOP is necessary for effectiveness and impact. Coordination and exchange of information remain the key missing aspects of the relationship. The emails being circulated by GDOP highlighting the latest from the negotiations are welcomed and show that the PA is finally getting its acts together when it comes to controlling the discourse regarding the conflict.

Both APAN and AFOPA are happy to brief the GDOP on a regular basis on latest discussions with key politicians and share strategies and approaches.

### ***5.2.11 Interview 11***

#### **Palestine Advocacy Resource Person Interview 11** **July 2014**

#### **A Brief Overview of Palestinian Advocacy in Australia:**

The movement was born in 1973 in Sydney with the establishment of an organization called the Friends of Palestine (separate to AFOPA). The Palestine Human Rights Campaign followed soon after. These two groups released weekly newsletters; located and advocated with politicians who were pro-Palestinian.

They worked primarily on campuses where there was a strong Anti-Vietnam protest movement.

At this time the PLO had no representation in Australia but all supporters of Palestine in Australia were supporters of the PLO. The PLO's first representative came in the 1970s in the form of the Palestinian Information Office.

In 1974, there was an attempt to send a PLO Delegation to Australia. The delegation weren't granted visas. Subsequently (in 1975) the Australian Union of Students invited the General Unions on a speaking tour. This interviewee was on the speaking tour as the international vice-president. They met with politicians, foreign affairs caucuses, and ministers. This was the first official Palestinian delegation to visit Australia and signaled the commencement of Australian-Palestinian diplomatic relations. Soon after that visit, many Australian leaders visited the PLO in Beirut.

Two Palestinian community organizations sprung up around that time. These groups – the General Union of Palestinian Workers and the Australian Palestinian Club - remain the most prominent today.

In terms of advocacy, there was an organization called the Palestinian Cultural Centre (separate to current cultural centre) involved with media work, radio programs, meetings with politicians, and newsletters.

Nowadays the movement is split into Palestinian groups and sympathetic Australian groups.

**What do you see as the main, broad challenges to effective-Palestine advocacy in Australia? (capacity, constituency, structural issues etc.)**

There is a generational gap. Many skilled operators are getting old; we have largely neglected skilling youth to continue the work that has done so far. These youth are not skilled or experience. Youth is one issue that needs to be addressed in the near future as a priority. We have been celebrating the graduations of school and university students from Palestine. We are going to target them and try to skill them up to continue the fight.

There are serious issues with financial resources. All the work being done in the last four decades came out of activists' pockets. Australia is a very expensive place. Also, the Zionist movement spends tens of millions of dollars working full time for them. There is no way we can compete with them on these grounds. We have to compensate through our (Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim) community numbers.

The Pro-Israel lobby is serious thorn in our work. They send delegations to Israel on a monthly basis – these people come back completely brainwashed. This can undo all of the good work done over years.

**How might these challenges be overcome? (eg. strategies for engaging the Arab community, Youth, new constituencies, building professionalism etc.)**

We need to find away to conduct a range of activities in a sustainable manner.

Striking a balance between advocacy with influential figures and grassroots activism is very important. Getting as much media time as possible is key. Rallies can also be useful for galvanizing sympathetic communities.



Meetings with politicians are also extremely useful. Starting with the late 80s, there were regular meetings with politicians (at the time it was the Labor party under Hawke) including with ministers & the Prime Minister (very pro-Zionist) himself. These meetings were very public, with press conferences before and after etc.

However, the most effective advocacy work is 'quiet diplomacy.' Meeting with politicians, parliamentarians, and leaders behind closed doors to try and play on the factions within the parties, shift individual opinions, and ultimately shift party policies. This latter is the most important point today.

We recognize that this is a long term project.

For example, on 26 July the NSW Labor Party will be having its conference. We are trying to push for a resolution supporting recognition of the Palestinian State. Obviously it will be difficult because the Zionists will put forward their own proposal. We already know that the ultimate outcome will be a third 'compromise' position. But we need to keep plugging away. It is still a step forward. Such gains take time but you have to 'chip away'

### **How might Palestinian advocates in Australia best respond to the current government's perspective on Israel and Palestine (arguments, strategies, actions)?**

There has always been a major problem with the Liberals, since 1975.

No matter what we do to break into the coalition and build up friendships, it will always be of limited value. The mainstream of this party is getting more and more conservative. Its going to take a very long time before we can do anything significant with this new party.

The only way to deal with the Liberal party in Australia is to encourage PLO and the PA to take a tough stance vis-à-vis the government, whether through the Arab League, or the OIC. Tough language is the only language they will understand.

While the Brandis affair is important, it is only a symptom of the major problem. It came at the tail end of a series of statements (eg. Bishop's statements on settlements in Israel + regressive votes in the UN). This government's political stand was apparent from the outset. The movement should have responded strongly from the outset.

We should also prod the Labor and Greens to put pressure on the Coalition. There are two or three members of the Coalition who are sympathetic.

### **What can be done to enhance and strengthen relationships or improve ways of working between the GDOP and civil society groups in Australia? With yours in particular?**

There are fringe groups who are not fond of the PLO. Among these are extreme left Australian organisations. This also includes small Palestinian groups. The overwhelming majority is in support of the PLO, Fatah, and by extension, the

Delegation. Those in the community feel it is our obligation to extend support to the Delegation and protect it from anti-PLO groups.

It is important to maintain very good relations with the Delegation; to exchange information and ideas and to sit together to work out strategies & tactics. It is important to realize that the Delegation is a diplomatic body. What we can do as a community, the Delegation cannot do as a diplomatic body.

Some within the community have been extremely well connected with politicians for decades. We try to use our connections to facilitate the work of the delegation.

So there are different roles, but they are complementary and have to work together.

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