



14 March 2024

## **Cancellation of Australian Visitor Visas**

### **Statement**

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific has been informed by members of the Australian Palestinian community about the sudden cancellation of their relatives' Australian visitor visas (subclass 600) while they were *en route* from Gaza to Australia, and has sent a letter to Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Senator the Hon Penny Wong and Home Affairs Minister the Hon Clare O'Neil MP in this regard.

With extreme difficulty, these individuals and families were finally able to exit through the Rafah crossing and escape unimaginable horrors in Gaza, only to find themselves stranded in transit countries, unable to travel onward to Australia. Transit countries permitted them entry for a limited time only because they held Australian visas: they will be forced to leave, but they have nowhere else to go.

The General Delegation of Palestine stressed to the Ministers that introducing such unjustified measures will undermine the positive engagement process between the Australian government and the Palestinian community, and widen the gap that is already growing between them, worsened by Australia's ongoing suspension of aid to UNRWA.

The Australian Palestinian community has recognised, with appreciation and relief, the progress made in the Australian government's position with regards to the catastrophic situation in Gaza, especially in response to Israel's illegal and inhumane proposed invasion of Rafah, ongoing obstruction of humanitarian aid, and use of starvation as a weapon. Reinstating the cancelled visas that were a lifeline to countless Australians and their loved ones will undoubtedly support positive engagement between the Palestinian community and the Australian government.

The General Delegation of Palestine urgently calls on Australian authorities to reconsider this decision and enable those who have been granted visas to travel safely to Australia.

*For more information, please contact the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific.*