



**COLUMBAN CENTRE FOR
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Letter to my Muslim and Jewish Sisters and Brothers in Australia

Dear Muslim and Jewish sisters and brothers,

Along with Christians around the world, I am currently observing Lent, a time of preparation for commemorating the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. At this time, I am painfully aware of the immense suffering and death in the land where Jesus suffered, died, and was raised.

I acknowledge the deep trauma inflicted on the people of southern Israel by Hamas on the 7th of October—the savage attacks, brutal murders, cruel rapes, and taking of hostages—and the devastating impact this is having on my Jewish sisters and brothers in Israel and around the world, including here in Australia.

I acknowledge the immense suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza—five months of constant bombing, more than 30,000 killed, many of them children, thousands more injured, 1.9 million displaced, in urgent need of food, water, medical supplies, and shelter—and the anguish this is causing my Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine and around the world, including here in Australia.

I am dismayed by the partisanship shown by many governments around the world, including federal, state, and local levels here in Australia, which favoured one side of the conflict and overlooked the deeply felt concerns of the other, causing deep division in our multicultural society.

I feel torn by the partisan attitudes, hurtful accusations, and inflammatory language of individuals, communities, and media outlets, contributing to the rising tides of antisemitism and islamophobia tearing at the fabric of our multi-religious society here in Australia.

Sisters and brothers, I hear your hurt and empathise with your pain. I feel helpless in the face of this immense suffering. My words are inadequate. I am shamed by much of the world's, the churches', and my own silence, complicity, and impotence before such gross inhumanity.

I choose to stand in solidarity with all victims, Israeli and Palestinian, Jew, Muslim, and Christian. I appeal for an immediate end to the war, the return of hostages, the release of prisoners, the lifting of the blockade, and provision of humanitarian aid to those in desperate need. I implore governments to facilitate a just and lasting settlement that respects the legitimate rights of both Israelis and Palestinians. I seek the restoration of civil discourse that promotes truth, respect, and harmony in societies everywhere, including here in Australia. I pray that the God of Abraham—whose universal love, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation we will all soon variously celebrate at Easter, Passover, and Eid—may bring peace and friendship to all the children of Abraham.

Patrick J McInerney

Rev Dr Patrick McInerney
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