



**Media Release
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Urgent Appeal to Australian Government: Palestine Australia Relief and Action (PARA) Calls for Immediate Action Amid Gaza Crisis

Tuesday, 4 June 2024

Palestinians in Gaza are enduring an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, their families in Australia urge the Government to respond with urgency, leadership and compassion and without discrimination.

The violent escalation of the decades-old siege has already killed more than 35,000 civilians, with over one million more displaced in unsafe and unhygienic camps, on the verge of starvation. Despite the shelter in camps, they are not safe, with a second tent camp attacked in as many weeks, following the recent bombing of a camp in Rafah which killed 45 people and wounded 249.

With the absence of urgently needed international aid on the ground, and a lack of material and meaningful diplomatic intervention from Australia and other major Western countries, the situation for Palestinians worsens with each day.

"Palestinian-Australians are watching our loved ones face slaughter and starvation, denied basic human rights, dignity and protection - where is the compassion?" said Reem Borrows, PARA Board member.

No humanitarian visas have been offered to Palestinians despite the Australian Government having made visa pathways available for people fleeing conflict in other parts of the world. Worse still, almost 5,000 Palestinian visa applications - many of whom are loved ones of Australian citizens trying to flee Gaza - have been rejected.

"Those who have managed to save the lives of their family members, and bring them here, at great personal and financial costs, are looking to our government for leadership and support, but there is nothing. The Victorian Government recently provided much-needed funds and the South Australia Government is providing some basic humanitarian support, but the Federal Government is not only providing zero support, but actually hampering our efforts to bring our families to safety in Australia."

While announcements have been made, there is no progress on funding been directed to Palestinian-Australian organisations to support the community, with PARA and partner organisations relying on donations to provide essential support for Palestinians arriving in Australia who have no belongings.

"We are fully reliant on the generosity of an exhausted, overstretched and grieving Palestinian community. The community in Australia feel we have been failed by the government at almost every level over the past eight months. As they continue to refuse to help us, the likelihood our loved ones will not survive increases, it is unbearable," said Reem.



PARA is calling on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil, and Minister for Immigration Andrew Giles to urgently:

1. Reunite Palestinian-Australians with their loved ones

- Grant humanitarian visas to relatives of Australian citizens, many of whom are currently being denied and rejected, including brothers, sisters and other immediate relatives
- Reinstate visas for Palestinians who previously had theirs cancelled or have expired before they were able to flee Gaza
- Review visa pathways against previous humanitarian intakes and offer newly arrived Palestinians the same access to support, study, work and travel
- Establish clear channels to communicate about visa processes, options and updates, and resolve issues

2. Fund basic settlement services

- Provide adequate funding for basic and urgent humanitarian services to newly arriving Palestinians including accommodation, food items, and household essentials
- Allocate funds to Palestinian-run organisations like PARA to support newly arriving Palestinians

3. Condemn breaches of international law

- Condemn the ongoing violations of international law in Palestine
- Support International Criminal Court (ICC) and International Court of Justice (ICJ) findings, investigations and actions

PARA is a non-for-profit organisation founded by proud Australians of Palestinian descent and operated through an impressively large network of highly qualified volunteers from diverse backgrounds and skill sets.

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