



Israel (Grievance Debate)

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:37): Commenting on foreign affairs issues is always fraught with danger; however, there are times when silence is not the answer. We have seen in the past silence, inaction or indifference leading to horrific outcomes for groups of people. While the trauma is immediate, it is also intergenerational.

A number of groups of particular faiths and cultures have been victims of silence by world leaders. The unfolding tragedy and humanitarian crisis in Palestine today is one of those times when it is no longer acceptable to take a neutral position. By 'neutral position' I mean the terrible loss of life in Palestine cannot be legally or morally viewed as collateral damage.

The killing of innocent civilians can never be justified and, in particular, the killing of children can never be justified. I challenge a person's moral compass if they try to justify the killing of innocent children. Whether it is an act of resistance or an act of defence, it is wrong, full

stop. I raise this issue because last week the federal opposition leader stated that Israel's military response to the horrific Hamas attack was proportionate and appropriate.

I challenge that statement. In doing so, I do not seek to diminish the trauma and grief felt by the families of the 1,200 people killed by Hamas, or the 240 people held hostage. The trauma felt by the Israeli nation is both real and understandable. Hamas's actions have been and should be condemned.

In response to the Hamas attack, Israel has killed over 29,000 Palestinians, including around 12,000 children. The killing of children is not justified, so Israel's response is, rightly, condemned. Apart from the loss of life in Gaza, the destruction of homes, hospitals, schools and infrastructure means that Palestinians are now living in inhumane conditions.

Mr Dutton's comments were in response to a joint statement issued by Canada, New Zealand and Australia, countries that share

similar histories and values. The statement seeks to advance the interests of peace for both Palestinians and Israelis. The statement was prompted by Israel's announcement that it seeks to attack Rafah, the last refuge for 1.5 million Palestinians. I quote from that statement because I think it is relevant:

A military operation into Rafah would be catastrophic. About 1.5 million Palestinians are taking refuge in the area, including many of our citizens and their families...

The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law. Palestinian civilians cannot be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas.

The statement goes on to say:

Ultimately, a negotiated political solution is needed to achieve lasting peace and security. Australia, Canada, and New Zealand remain steadfast in their commitment to a two-state solution, including the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side in peace, security, and dignity.

I think that statement is an appropriate statement. It seeks to create a culture of peace.

The Vatican has described the situation in Gaza as carnage and the Israeli response as disproportionate. I have not always agreed with our federal government's response on this conflict, but I do commend our foreign minister for trying to build a coalition for peace, compared to Mr Dutton's warmongering and dog whistling. For those who watched

Nemesis, it is not sufficient for Mr Dutton to divide his party; he now wants to divide our nation.

I raise this issue in this place because it matters to the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim people who call South Australia their home. Their grief and trauma should not be treated with less compassion, empathy and respect than that rightly shown to the Jewish community. As always, blessed are the peacemakers.