



RAMADAN (GRIEVANCE DEBATE)

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:37): At the moment, Christians in our community are celebrating the period of Lent, which is a time of reflection, and often fasting is used to give us an opportunity to reflect on our society and on ourselves. In our Muslim community, we are coming up to the period of Ramadan. I understand Ramadan starts at sundown on this Sunday 10 March. It is the holy month of fasting and a period of introspection, communal prayer and reading of the Koran. It is my further understanding that, during this period, God forgives the past sins of those who observe the holy month with fasting, prayer and faithful intention. This is not too dissimilar to what we do in Lent. It is an important period for the lives of Muslim people across the world, including Muslim people in our home state of South Australia.

Sadly, this year Ramadan will be celebrated against the backdrop of the violence and destruction currently taking place in Palestine. If that is not bad enough, we have been told that the Israeli

government is planning to invade, for lack of a better word, Rafah, one of the cities in Palestine, just before the start of Ramadan. So we have a whole nation celebrating their holiest month, and we have their neighbour who seeks to then invade that nation at that time.

Regarding the violence and destruction inflicted by the state of Israel, through the IDF, on the Palestinian people, I now know, for example, that over 30,000 people—men, women and children—have been killed in Palestine. That is more than the men, women and children in my hometown of Gawler. The equivalent of the whole town has been destroyed, and that's the state's second-biggest country town, to put that into context.

If the world does not take action, we will be witnesses to the destruction of a whole civilisation. This conflict did not start on 7 October 2023, as some people opposite have tried to suggest. This conflict started back in 1948. It was created when the UN unilaterally decided to partition Palestine into two states. Since 7

October 2023, over 650,000 homes in the urban areas of Palestine have been destroyed by Israeli bombardment; 1.8 million people have been displaced. The destruction has also had a long-lasting impact on the history and culture of Palestinian people. For example, on 19 October, the oldest church in Gaza, Saint Porphyrius, was destroyed. This Greek Orthodox Church is testament to the multicultural and multifaith history of Palestine. The Great Omari Mosque also lies in ruins. These and over 200 other religious and cultural sites have been reduced to dust by the Israeli invasion of Palestine.

When Islamic State waged its war on history, identity and material heritage, an international outcry rightly ensued. Europe and the United States quite rightly spoke out against that destruction. While this happens, Western leaders are essentially silent. It goes without saying that we acknowledge the right of both Israelis and Palestinian people to live in equality, peace, prosperity and security within Israel and Palestine. So, what needs to happen?

There needs to be an immediate ceasefire of all military action between all the parties involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Australia needs to also acknowledge the Palestinian right to immediate statehood. The Australian government needs to find ways to reinstate its funding commitment to UNRWA as a matter of urgency. We need to also give effect as to the decisions of the International Court of Justice and continue to build a coalition for peace in the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Our Muslim community deserve the opportunity to celebrate Ramadan in peace. As always, blessed are the peacemakers.