



Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

MOTION

Middle East



Mr BERKMAN (Maiwar—Grn) (4.31 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes that:
 - (a) more than 30,400 people have been killed, over 72,000 wounded and approximately two million displaced by Israel's bombardment of Palestine since 7 October 2023.
 - (b) most hospitals in Gaza have been forced to close, and the healthcare system does not have capacity to cope with the number of dead and wounded Palestinians, particularly in northern Gaza.
 - (c) Israel has refused to agree to a ceasefire and continues to threaten invasion of the Rafah region, where approximately 1.4 million people are now sheltering.
 - (d) the Labor state government has provided public support and funds for arms manufacturers who supply weapons used in Israel's attacks, many of which amount to war crimes according to Human Rights Watch and the UN.
 - (e) this includes at least \$9 million for manufacturers to supply Boeing with weapons, and a 2023 manufacturing capability grant of an unknown amount to Ferra Engineering to supply Boeing's Ghost Bat program.
 - (f) Ferra Engineering is the sole supplier of F-35 jet fighter components, which the Israeli Defence Force confirmed on 7 November 2023 have been used to drop 900kg JDAM bombs in their invasion of Gaza.
2. calls on the government to:
 - (a) immediately withdraw public support and funding for companies involved in the manufacture and supply of weapons to the State of Israel, including Ferra.
 - (b) actively advocate for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages and political prisoners, reinstatement of aid and an end to the State of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

This government can no longer evade responsibility for its part in the unfolding genocide in Palestine. Since the Hamas attacks on 7 October last year—and I want to put on the record again, to avoid any doubt, that the Greens unequivocally condemn those attacks on civilians—Israel has retaliated with such devastating and unbridled force that it is hard to witness and it is impossible to bear. Israel has refused to agree to a ceasefire and continues to threaten the invasion of the Rafah region, where approximately 1.4 million people are now sheltering.

There can be no remaining doubt that Israel is undertaking the collective punishment of Palestinian citizens, which is a war crime under international law. Each day the toll rises, but we know that more than 30,400 people have been killed and that somewhere between 58 and 70 per cent of those people are women and children. Over 72,000 have been wounded and approximately two million displaced since 7 October last year. While the healthcare system in Gaza struggles to cope, Israel continues to justify attacks on key infrastructure including schools, hospitals, and places of worship, by claiming that Hamas leaders are using these places for cover. Implicit in this argument is the assumption that hundreds of civilian Palestinian lives do not matter if one Hamas leader is also killed. We would never endorse the bombing of a Brisbane hospital to target one terrorist hiding inside, so why do political leaders, including the Labor Party, continue to endorse this in Palestine?

The death and destruction in Gaza may seem far away, but it starts right here in Brisbane because, thanks to the Labor state government, Queensland is now a key contributor to those bombs being dropped on civilians in Gaza. In 2018 the government did an \$18 million deal with Boeing, of which \$9 million was allocated to boost the weapons manufacturing capabilities of businesses supplying Boeing with weapons parts. They have also given Ferra Engineering a grant to manufacture parts for Boeing's Ghost Bat program. The Treasurer has regularly boasted of the government's support for Ferra, which builds the AME weapons adaptors that hold and release bombs from Lockheed Martin's F-35 jet fighters. These are the bombers that the Israeli Defence Force confirmed on 7 November last year have been used to drop 900-kilogram JDAM bombs in their invasion of Gaza. This government is loudly and proudly supporting the companies that are enabling war crimes in Gaza. Israel has destroyed hospitals, schools and places of worship. It has directly attacked non-military targets. It has forced population transfers, deliberately starved civilian populations and openly expressed its aim of ethnic cleansing.

These and other violations of international law have been documented and reported by organisations like Human Rights Watch and the UN. Israel has deliberately blocked humanitarian assistance, including the delivery of water, food and fuel, for months. One in four Palestinians are one step away from famine according to the UN's humanitarian office, and 90 per cent of children under the age of two are facing severe food poverty. Thousands of aid trucks are unable to enter the region, and the desperation is so high that more than 100 Palestinians were killed and over 700 injured in a stampede last week just trying to access aid trucks near Gaza while Israeli troops opened fire. Meanwhile, the federal Labor government has withdrawn \$6 million in aid funding.

This motion calls for an end to support for the weapons manufacturers enabling Israel's war crimes and to instead ensure humanitarian aid is reinstated. It calls on this government to break its silence on Palestine and to advocate for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages and political prisoners. It also calls for an end to the state of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories because we must be clear that this war did not start on 7 October last year. This is a Nakba of inconceivable proportions, but it is not the first Nakba.

In 2022 Amnesty International determined that Israel is practising the crime of apartheid against Palestinians. The UN Special Rapporteur found that Israel had 'prevented realisation of Palestinian people's right to self-determination, violating each component of that right, wilfully pursuing the "de-Palestinianisation" of the occupied territory'. The bombardment and invasions of Gaza since 7 October are a continuation of this project of de-Palestinianisation. The objective is not to destroy Hamas but to destroy Palestine. In order to achieve lasting peace, the occupation must end. Free, free Palestine! This is a call for courage from Labor members here—

(Time expired)