



The political establishment isn't backing the Palestinians

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Highlight: An anti-Israel petition for politicians secured only 215 signatures, mostly minor figures, demonstrating support for the Jewish state in political circles.

Body

Even ***Anne Aly*** didn't sign.

A petition for politicians organised by the Palestinian lobby obtained a mere 215 signatures: not one of the signatories, apart from Greens leader Adam Bandt, exercise significant power. Almost half are or were councillors.

Not one of the teal independents and only three federal Labor MPs were prepared to put their name to the 14-point document, which went public on Tuesday and supports the Palestinian narrative of Israeli colonialism. Or, in the words of the conflict, Jewish apartheid.

[Link to Image](#)

Alex Ellinghausen

"It is beyond dispute that Israel is committed to policies designed to entrench the domination of one people over another," the petition says. "Attempts to deny this, or smear those who allege it, are an attempt to defy truth and reality."

Above probably anyone else in the federal government, Aly, the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, has the moral authority to pull Labor away from Israel's orbit. Aly is [the first Muslim woman](#), first Arab, and first Egyptian-born person elected to the House of Representatives.

Yet, the co-organiser of the ***Australia*** Palestine Advocacy Network couldn't secure her endorsement, let alone a signature. Reached on Tuesday morning, Aly said: "As a member of the executive I am unable to sign petitions. This does not mean that I am not passionate about the plight of the Palestinian people and committed to peace in the region that I am culturally and linguistically connected to."

Aly is probably referring to cabinet solidarity principles, whereby ministers are expected to toe the party line, or resign if they feel compelled to break from the government's position on contentious issues.

Sanctions demands

The political establishment isn't backing the Palestinians

The lack of Labor signatories looks like a sign of institutional support for Israel in the upper political echelons, even as western Sydney ministers such as [Tony Burke, Ed Husic and Chris Bowen](#) signal to Muslim constituents anger over death and devastation in Gaza.

Australian Palestinians do not help themselves with extreme demands. They haven't excused the murderous Hamas rampage of October 7 - an event the petition acknowledged - but their expectations aren't within the bounds of diplomatic reality for a Western democracy either. They include the imposition of sanctions on Israeli political, military and media figures to punish the "genocidal regime".

As for the Jewish lobby - a term its members resist for historical reasons - it seemed pleased with the petition's thin response. Does anyone remember Brian Howe or Ian Macphee? Who cares about the positions of four assistant ministers in the NSW Labor government when the Premier, Chris Minns, promises to prosecute young men who chant "gas the Jews"?

"I thought the outcome might be worse," said one Jewish leader, who didn't want to go on the record because he thought it would give the petition more publicity.

In PR terms, it was effective, though. The Sydney Morning Herald, given a copy, [published it on Tuesday's](#) front page despite the limited sign-up. Another pro-Palestinian petition, for journalists, obtained 334 signatures, including some from The Australian Financial Review, and sparked an industry debate about how to cover people and governments we dislike.

Which side?

Australians are split. Forty per cent want the Israeli army to withdraw from Gaza immediately; 33 per cent don't, according to a Roy Morgan [poll last month](#).

At the same time, about half say [**Australia**](#) shouldn't take sides, which might help explain why the Labor government is simultaneously supporting Israel while criticising it.

Last week, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese issued a statement with his Canadian and New Zealand counterparts on the war. They didn't call for an unconditional ceasefire, which would allow Hamas to strengthen its defences. The Israeli lobby was pleased.

A few hours later, [**Australia** voted for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire"](#) in the United Nations General Assembly, which delighted the Palestinians.

Work that out. Many can't. Which may be the objective.

Graphic

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth [**Anne Aly**](#) in parliament on November 29.

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