



Dutton tells Albanese to visit Israel as Labor loyalties tested

AFR Online

October 19, 2023 Thursday 7:30 AM UTC

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Length: 517 words

Highlight: Peter Dutton says the prime minister should prioritise a trip to Israel ahead of the United States.

Body

Peter Dutton says Anthony Albanese should prioritise a visit to Tel Aviv ahead of his trip to the United States next week, as two Labor ministers effectively accused Israel of war crimes by pointing to its "collective punishment" of Palestinians in besieged Gaza.

With other world leaders visiting Israel to show support and try to stop the conflagration worsening, Mr Dutton messaged Mr Albanese earlier this week with the suggestion, then called publicly for the itinerary change on Thursday.

[Link to Image](#)

Alex Ellinghausen

"That should be the priority, frankly, of any international travel at the moment so that we can seek to be part of an alliance, to keep the pressure down on those who seek to have a wider conflict in the region," Mr Dutton said.

Mr Albanese dismissed the suggestion and plans to leave on Sunday for a four-day official visit to Washington. The trip risks creating controversy at home given the prime minister's heavy travel schedule, and the juxtaposition of a black-tie dinner at the White House amid catastrophic events unfolding in the Middle East.

As the carnage in Gaza worsens due to Israel's reprisal raids, the uneasy truce that has held within Labor since the October 7 atrocities perpetrated in Israel by Hamas began to fray.

Cabinet minister Ed Husic and junior minister **Anne Aly**, who are both Muslim, expressed sympathy for Israel but also spoke out at its reprisal tactics of bombardments and cutting off fuel, water and electricity, all of which is causing immense suffering in Gaza.

Senior government figures said the view from the top was that the comments were balanced and, if anything, would help defuse tensions in the community, which ASIO has warned could lead to spontaneous violence.

Mr Husic said while Israel had "paid a terrible price for the barbarism of Hamas", which left 1400 people dead in southern Israel, and called for the unconditional release of almost 200 hostages, he was worried Palestinians would also pay a hefty price.

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"I feel very strongly that Palestinians are being collectively [punished here for Hamas' barbarism](#)," Mr Husic told the ABC.

About 3000 Palestinians had thus far been killed in reprisal raids but "we don't see any public landmarks in **Australia** that have been lit up in red, black, white and green".

Dr Aly, a counterterrorism expert before entering parliament, said the Arab community was also feeling pained.

"It's difficult to argue that those children are Hamas, and it's difficult to argue that what is currently occurring is not a form of collective punishment," she said.

Backbencher Maria Vamvakinou expressed similar sympathies at a pro-Palestinian rally outside Parliament House.

Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-CEO Alex Ryvchin said Israel wanted to destroy Hamas not just for its own benefit but for that of the Palestinian people. It was the same rationale behind the elimination of ISIS, he said.

"The only way to ensure the safety and protection of both Israelis and Palestinians is to destroy Hamas completely so that they can never perform these atrocities and draw the region into war again," Mr Ryvchin said.

Graphic

Cabinet minister Ed Husic and junior minister **Anne Aly** in parliament on Thursday.

Load-Date: October 22, 2023