

Friends and comrades,

I am honoured to introduce this motion to Council.

In doing so, I acknowledge that I speak on stolen land, the land of the Wurundjeri people, whose sovereignty was never ceded.

This is, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

My ancestral home is in Palestine, in the village of Arrabeh in the occupied West Bank. My grandparents were forced to leave in 1948, in what we call the "Nakba" - an Arabic word meaning "catastrophe" - when the indigenous population of Palestine was forcibly expelled to make way for the establishment of the State of Israel.

It has been nearly 75 years since then.

For 75 years, Palestine has been occupied.

For 75 years, the refugees that were expelled have been denied justice. They, their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, are still denied our inalienable right to return home.

Palestinians make up the biggest refugee population in the world today: 1 in 3 refugees are Palestinian, and many of them still languish in refugee camps with no path home.

Despite this, Israel entitles any Jewish person in the world the opportunity to migrate and settle in Israel, often in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Palestinians are subject to the forced seizure and demolition of our homes and properties, often under the pretence of "archaeological excavations" - but settler homes go up as soon as Palestinians are kicked out.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of the system of domination and control that Israel exerts on the Palestinian people.

It is a system of two laws for two people - a system of racial separation known to the world as the crime of apartheid.

This is the legal opinion issued by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and by Israeli human rights groups B'Tselem and Yesh Din. Israel is committing the crime of apartheid, as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The crimes committed against our people are extreme - they are not subtle - and they go ahead unchecked by the international community.

But we continue to bear witness, speak truth to power, and narrate our own dispossession for the world to see and hear. I am proud to stand before you today, as a Palestinian, to commend this motion to the floor.

This motion, which has been drafted by a collective of Palestinian, Aboriginal, and Jewish university workers and allies, has been endorsed by more than 150 academic and professional staff across 28 branches.

I call on you to stand in solidarity with us. To invoke the spirit of Gough Whitlam's 1972 campaign: it's time.

It's time for change. It's time for our union to take a strong and unambiguous stance against apartheid and settler colonialism, in Australia, in Palestine, and wherever it exists.

To close, I leave you to reflect on these words by the late Palestinian poet-laureate Mahmoud Darwish:

As you prepare your breakfast, think of others

(do not forget to feed the pigeons).

As you wage your wars, think of others

(do not forget those who seek peace).

As you pay your water bill, think of others

(those who are nursed by clouds).

As you return home, to your home, think of others

(do not forget those who live in tents).

As you sleep and count the stars, think of others

(those who have nowhere to sleep).

As you express yourself in metaphor, think of others

(those who have lost the right to speak).

As you think of others far away, think of yourself

(say: If only I were a candle in the dark).