

# Australian foreign minister travels to Israel to back ongoing genocide in Gaza

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Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong travelled to Israel this week in a show of complete solidarity with the Zionist regime as it continues and deepens a genocidal onslaught that has claimed over 30,000 Palestinian lives in Gaza over the past three months. Wong's was the first visit to Israel by an Australian foreign minister since 2016.

In keeping with its character as a mid-sized imperialist power closely aligned with the US, Australia has backed the Israeli campaign since it began after October 7. In the initial weeks of the onslaught, Wong and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese were as bellicose as any world leader in insisting upon Israel's "right" to bomb Palestinians and in threatening and demonising those opposing the slaughter.

Over the past couple of months, they have carried out a shift in tone, not substance. Wong and Albanese have shed crocodile tears over the mass deaths without withdrawing support for Israel in the slightest or even criticising it. The posturing is a response to the mass opposition that has erupted against the genocide, including ongoing weekly protests involving tens of thousands of people.

Above all, though, Labor leaders have sought not to mention Israel or Gaza, and to the extent that they do, to present it as a distant conflict with which they have no involvement.

These cynical efforts were on display when Wong addressed the Australian media just prior to her departure at the beginning of the week. Australia, she said, was not a "central player" in the Middle East. The "conflict" was "devastating and tragic," and Wong would be "focusing on advocating Australia's position, our priority on international humanitarian assistance, our priority on international humanitarian law."

In a transparent attempt to dress up her tour as even-handed, Wong first travelled to Jordan, where she met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi.

The meaningless character of her references to "international humanitarian law" were made abundantly clear, when a journalist asked about Australia's position on the South African case before the International Court of Justice, charging Israel with genocide. The case is rigorously factual, citing both Israel's actions and the explicitly genocidal statements of its leaders, who have called for Gaza to be clear of Palestinians.

"Our support for the ICJ and respect for its independence

does not mean we accept the premise of South Africa's case," Wong replied blandly.

Wong essentially fobbed off all follow-up questions on the case, fobbed off Safadi who expressed support for the South African charge and fobbed off another query, as to whether she would seek any concrete assurances from Israeli leaders, given her stated "humanitarian concerns." "I don't think Australia can come to the region demanding specific assurances," Wong replied, before waffling on about the importance of recognising "common humanity."

The manifest insincerity of it all even found monetary expression. Having presented herself as a humanitarian crusader, Wong arrived in the region with what for the Australian government and ruling elite amounts to loose change.

While in Jordan, she pledged \$21 million in humanitarian assistance. That sum would buy roughly 14 average houses in Sydney. It equates to about \$700 for every Palestinian who has been murdered by Israel in Gaza, or around \$500 each for the more than 50,000 injured. It is 0.0057 percent of the \$368 billion Wong's Labor government pledged last year to buy nuclear-powered attack submarines as part of the US preparations for war against China.

Even still, most of the \$21 million has nothing to do with Gaza. The greater part, \$11.5 million, is committed to "refugee programs" in Lebanon and Syria, dovetailing with Israel's attempts to use the humanitarian catastrophe it has deliberately created to force the mass displacement and ethnic cleansing of the Gazans.

Having left Jordan and travelled to Israel, the real character of Wong's tour, as an endorsement of genocide, was undeniable. Despite her protestations that Australia is not a "central player" in the region, Wong was accorded a very high-level welcome. She was met by President Isaac Herzog and the country's foreign minister and energy and infrastructure minister, Israel Katz.

Herzog took the opportunity to congratulate Prime Minister Albanese for having delivered one of the "best speeches given by any world leader," according to the *Jerusalem Post*. Herzog was referring to Albanese's remarks after October 7, consisting of unhinged and bloodcurdling denunciations of Hamas, and a

carte blanche for the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

After meeting with Wong, Katz issued a public statement expressing his “dear gratitude for her expression of solidarity with Israel and her crystal clear condemnation of the atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7th.” Their closed-door tête-à-tête had been a “constructive meeting.”

Unnamed officials told the *Guardian* that Wong had reassured Herzog and Katz of “Australia’s solidarity with Israel following the atrocities of 7 October” and “noted that she continued to call for the unconditional and immediate release of hostages in her engagements with countries of influence in the region.”

The reference to the hostages is a cynical cover. The real import of the remarks is that Wong is functioning as an advocate and defender of the fascistic Israeli regime in her trips throughout the region and more broadly. Those comments, from the anonymous officials, are worth infinitely more than Wong’s tired and lying references to humanitarianism.

Both Herzog and Katz feature prominently in the South African indictment for genocide. Herzog, aside from being one of the executive leaders of the government overseeing the mass murder, has clearly enunciated its genocidal intent. In October, he declared that Israel was not in a war with Hamas militants but with “an entire nation.” The Zionist regime would continue its bombardment “until we break their backbone.”

Katz, as energy minister, directly ordered a complete shutdown of fuel and other essential supplies to Gaza in October. “Without fuel, even the local electricity will shut down within days and the pumping wells will stop within a week,” Katz boasted. “This is what we will do to a nation of murderers and butchers of children.”

Wong, whose manner is that of a cold and officious bureaucrat, prattles on about the sanctity of civilian lives, while standing alongside and embracing these mass murderers. The image that comes to mind is of a state official insisting on the sanctity of human life while in a cordial conference with Hitler or Mussolini.

Inevitably, Wong met with the families of Israeli hostages and presented October 7 as a terrorist atrocity that had come out of the clear blue sky. Even many hostage families have noted that the flattening of Gaza hardly increases the chances of their returning alive. Their plight is simply the pretext for a long-planned operation of ethnic-cleansing.

Wong also met with the pompously-titled Chair of the Civil Commission on October 7 Crimes by Hamas Against Women and Children, Dr Cochav Elkayam-Levy. “Australia condemns Hamas’ use of sexual violence as a weapon to maximise terror and fear,” Wong declared in a statement.

Elkayam-Levy is an Israeli state asset. As the legal counsel for the Israeli government’s Human Rights Division, she crafted arguments justifying the force-feeding of Palestinian prisoners who had gone on hunger strike, a practice that is widely regarded as torture. Elkayam-Levy has been deployed to

lead a hysterical campaign alleging mass rapes on October 7, for which Israel itself has admitted there is no forensic evidence or even survivors willing to testify.

In a similar propaganda vein, Wong visited Yad Vashem, the world centre for Holocaust research. The head of Yad Vashem recently responded angrily to a call by more than 50 Holocaust experts to condemn the genocidal statements of Israeli leaders, essentially saying he was not interested. “Our area of concern is the Holocaust, and only the Holocaust.”

One of the more revealing exchanges during Wong’s visit came during a press conference in Jerusalem yesterday. A virulently Zionist journalist, who missed the memo on Wong’s “humanitarian rhetoric,” or was too obtuse to understand its phony character, asked: “Could your calls for a ceasefire in Gaza mean you are no longer supportive of Israel’s war against Hamas. And if so, were you ever supportive of Israel’s war against Hamas?”

Wong angrily responded: “Oh, really? I don’t agree with the premise of any of those, I don’t agree with how you have framed that question. We have been consistent in Israel having a right to self-defence. What we have also said is how it conducts itself in the pressing of that right, in the exercise of that right matters. And that has been my position from day one, that Israel does have a right to defend itself. It has a right to security, how it exercises that, matters.”

That summed it up. A few weasel words and full support for the ongoing bombardment.

Wong briefly visited the West Bank and met with representatives of the Palestinian Authority, who function as Israeli puppets. She also travelled to the United Arab Emirates.

Australia, in addition to backing the genocide, has also supported the repeated US and British airstrikes against Yemen, which are an illegal act of war against an oppressed country, and underscore Washington’s determination to instigate a broader regional war targeting Iran.



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