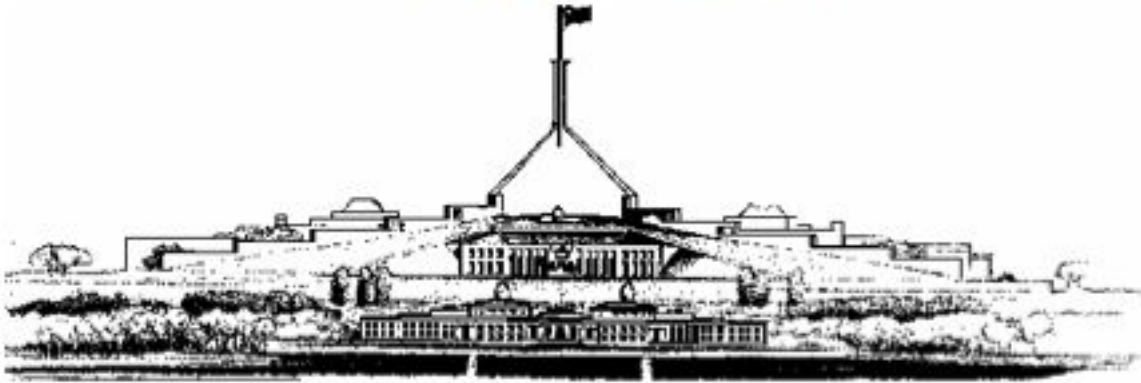




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**MOTIONS**

**Middle East**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 26 February 2024**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Monday, 26 February 2024	<b>Source</b> Senate
<b>Page</b> 4	<b>Proof</b> Yes
<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Steele-John, Sen Jordon	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Senator STEELE-JOHN** (Western Australia) (10:21): I seek leave to move a motion to give precedence to general business notice of motion No. 451 relating to Gaza. The motion has been circulated.

Leave not granted.

**Senator STEELE-JOHN:** Pursuant to the contingent notice of motion standing in the name of Senator Waters, I move:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving a motion relating to conduct of the business of the Senate—namely, a motion to give precedence to general business notice of motion No. 451 relating to Gaza.

Today, the Australian Greens are giving the Senate the opportunity to dissent—to oppose the ongoing invasion of Gaza. This week marks a very grim milestone. Nearly 30,000 people in Palestine have perished in the bombardment and invasion at the hands of the State of Israel. Countless more are beneath the rubble of buildings that used to be -at the heart of communities in the cities of Gaza City itself, Khan Younis and Rafah. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. People have a severe lack of food and water. The last time UN agencies were able to deliver food to northern Gaza was over a month ago. The World Health Organization estimates that 90 per cent of children under the age of two are in severe food poverty.

The Australian government must condemn the invasion of Gaza. People's access to medical aid is dwindling day by day. Much of Gaza's hospitals are now completely closed or have had operations severely limited by the siege. Such is the case in Al-Shifa, where the hospital's oxygen supply plant has been destroyed. Health staff are reported to be digging graves in the grounds of their places of work due to the large numbers of deaths that have occurred or are anticipated and the need to manage the horror of those corpses. The Australian government must condemn the invasion of Gaza. The scale of the human suffering that we are witnessing every night on TV and on social media is unimaginable. But, sadly, because of the actions of the State of Israel in the last three months, these unimaginable scenes have become everyday reality.

The government has failed the people of Palestine. The pausing of funding to UNRWA by Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs has cut off vital aid access. All our government have been able to offer in this time are, at best, meaningless words without action, and, at worst, they have made the situation worse. This situation is devastating.

The Australian parliament has the opportunity, in the face of Netanyahu stating once again that he intends an all-out assault on Rafah, to condemn, in no uncertain terms, the actions of the State of Israel. The world has been warning the State of Israel against an assault on Rafah, and the State of Israel has not been listening. Meanwhile, this government continues to sell arms to the IDF and enable them to drop bombs on children, hospitals, schools and refugee camps. This government, in pausing and effectively cutting funding and aid to Palestinians, has furthered the reality that they are on the brink of death, disease and starvation. This government has refused to back an immediate ceasefire that would see the siege ended and the bombing stopped. This government has refused to support the International Criminal Court's investigation into the State of Israel's genocide in Gaza, despite rightfully supporting Ukraine's case two years ago. The government can and must do more. That is why the Greens are calling on the Senate to formally vote to condemn the unequivocal support given to the State of Israel, to remove its support for the invasion of Gaza and to condemn the actions of the State of Israel. These crimes must be condemned. Failure to do so condemns the government.