

# Rallies support Palestine, vigil honours Israel victims

By Samantha Lock and Callum Godde  
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Thousands have gathered across Australia to rally in support of Palestine and Israel. (Flavio Brancatone/AAP PHOTOS)

Supporters of Palestine have rallied in Australia's major cities after a suspicious fire razed a Palestinian business and prompted a violent clash.

Victoria Police said 45,000 demonstrators gathered at the State Library of Victoria on Sunday to call for an end to the war in Gaza.

Hash Tayeh, whose Burgertory restaurant in Caulfield was fire-bombed on Friday, said his staff were threatened and harassed in an attempt to silence his support for Palestine.

"In a cruel act of arson, our store was reduced to ashes," Mr Tayah told the crowd while draped in a Palestinian flag.

"To those who sought to silence us with hate and violence, I say you will not succeed. Love and unity will always prevail."

Melbourne rally co-chair Raphael Duffy, a Jewish man and socialist activist, said he was buoyed by the scenes of hundreds of thousands of people rallying in London to support Palestine.

"If you want to fight against the kind of racism that caused the holocaust, you have to fight against the oppression of Palestinians today," he said.



Thousands attended a pro-Palestinian demonstration at Hyde Park in Sydney.

Other speakers included Victorian Greens Leader Samantha Ratnam, Medical Association for Prevention of War vice president Margaret Beavis and Palestinian academic Micaela Sahhar.

A nearby Starbucks closed temporarily and was plastered with stickers calling for a boycott of Israel, the coffeehouse chain having recently sued its own union after US workers expressed support for Palestine.

The large crowd chanted "ceasefire now" and "free Palestine" as it moved down Swanston St before continuing to Treasury Gardens and marching towards state parliament.

Thousands more met in Sydney's Hyde Park.

Palestine Action Group spokesperson Josh Lees said protesters, who have gathered every week for the past five, would not stop until there was a ceasefire.

"This is a great crime, this is a massacre, this is a genocide," he said.

Thousands also gathered for a vigil in Sydney to show solidarity for Israel, with many holding "kidnapped" signs and the images of those taken hostage by Hamas.



Palestine supporters also turned out in Brisbane's King George Square.

Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-chief Alex Rychin called for the destruction of the terrorist group, the safe rescue of every hostage and peace "for the land of Israel".

"Today, the Jewish people are one. There is no Israel and the diaspora," he told a crowd at Moore Park.

"If before October 7, the world did not know what we as Jews, as Zionists, were fighting for, now at least they know what we are fighting against."

But independent Jewish journalist and author Antony Loewenstein said it was untrue to suggest there was uniformity in the Australian Jewish community towards Israel and Palestine.

"Extreme Israeli actions against Palestinians both in Gaza and in the West Bank and elsewhere is not supported by vast swathes of the Australian Jewish community," he told AAP.

Mr Loewenstein said Mr Rychin's comments showed "no understanding and no sympathy for Palestinian suffering".

"This kind of sentiment actually contributes to rising anti-Semitism," he said.

Sydney police said a large contingent of officers was on hand to maintain safety and manage the crowds, although there were no arrests or incidents.

Protesters also gathered at Brisbane's King George Square, with a group holding Jewish and Maori flags performing the Haka behind a wall of police.

A rally in support of Israel was also held in another part of the city.

Demonstrations were also held outside Parliament House in Perth and Russell Square in Adelaide on Sunday.

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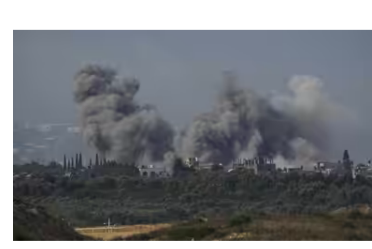


Imam Kamran Tahir believes a ceasefire is the only way to end the violence in the Middle East, a view increasingly shared by the broader community.

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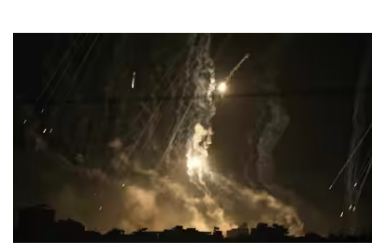


Palestinians say two babies have died and dozens more are at risk in Gaza hospitals Israel claims have been turned into fortified defence positions.

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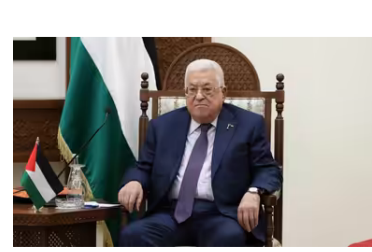


"Far too many Palestinians have been killed," the US chief diplomat says, as Gaza officials claim Israel's bombardment has resulted in over 11,000 deaths.

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Anthony Albanese has called Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas to condemn the Hamas attack on Israel and express concern over civilian casualties.

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