



Statement from Pax Christi Australia Condemning Police Violence Against Muslim People at Prayer

As Lunar New Year is about to begin and Christians the world over celebrate the Holy Season of Lent to remind us of what is sacred in world, Pax Christi Australia, a member of the international Catholic/Christian peace movement Pax Christi International, condemns the actions of police in Sydney on Monday 9, 2026 during a peaceful protest against the visit of the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog. Those present at the protest refused the comfort of silence knowing how this form of silence increases harm.

The protest was sacred. It was sacred as people with conscience protested an invitation to a collaborator and supporter of genocide in Gaza. It was sacred because of the presence of people during that time on the ground were in solidarity with grieving people. It was sacred as the humanity of peaceful people at prayer was violated by force and dragged away whilst kneeling non-threateningly in prostration to fulfil their Ramadan obligations. All this occurring outside a cold, stone, and locked cathedral!! The authorities deemed the action of the people at prayer as political protest when, in fact, Muslim people pray five times a day and they do in public when necessary.

Pax Christi condemns the silence of Catholic, and other religious leaders, at this violation of a sacred moment, as well as police violence in general. This silence, and the ongoing silence about genocide in Gaza, has left many people confused and leaderless. When Muslim people were pepper-sprayed and physically manhandled, they were not alone as Catholics and people of other faiths, and none were also affected. This in the name of security and social cohesion!! In fact, violence only seems to have emanated from those allegedly acting in the name of security and social cohesion. After people were dragged along the concrete, it was condemned as '*completely unacceptable*' by over 100 Muslim organisations but nothing from our religious leaders. Breaking up peaceful prayer cannot be warranted. When political leaders call on people to lower the temperature seems to be accusatory and attempts to defend violent actions. The temperature had already been lowered as people were nonviolently prostrating themselves in prayer.

Pax Christi Australia, on the other hand, applauds the courage shown by the condemnation Catholic leaders in Pakistan made after the suicide bombing at a mosque in Islamabad early in February as an attack on interreligious harmony and efforts toward peace and cause division in society. They called for patience, unity, and mutual respect, so that the message of peace and tolerance and spread the message of peace and tolerance instead of hatred, where such incidents are not repeated.

Pax Christi Australia seeks to oppose all violence by our words and actions. Islamic community leaders have been told to reign in their people as if they are the problem and ignores unprovoked institutional violence. Injustice cannot be permitted to be routine and normal by silence – a silence that causes people to believe their suffering is inevitable, and protest and resistance is futile. Their grief must be allowed to speak. We cannot wait for permission to speak, or for the right moment, or the right words if we are not to grow numb to political failure and moral collapse.

We have seen great courage from people on the ground, expressing the power of the powerless to be moral witness as a humanitarian crime unfolded and continues to unfold. Many have refused the call to stay out of politics and close their eyes about a catastrophe that humanitarian workers, doctors, and human-rights monitors call attention to, and which all should do everything we can to stop it.

Pax Christi Australia calls on all religious leaders to heed the call by Pope Leo in January that those who work in Catholic media and communications, and more so to the leaders, to give space to the stories of people who

are suffering and who are working for peace and are encouraged *'to be sowers of good words, amplifiers of voices that courageously seek reconciliation by disarming hearts of hatred and fanaticism.'* Leo continued, *'In a fragmented and polarized world, be the antennae that pick up and relay what the weak, marginalized, lonely, and those who need to know the joy of feeling loved, are experiencing.'*

In conclusion, may we all in Pope Leo's words, *'be seekers of truth in the love that explains everything, artisans of a word that embraces, of a communication capable of bringing together what is broken, of a balm for the wounds of humanity.'* <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2026-01/pope-leo-xiv-catholic-media-communications-peace-disarm-hearts.html>

Fr. Claude Mostowik msc
President
Pax Christi Australia
February 17, 2026