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Who is the obstacle to peace?

Providing a Voice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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With Israeli PM Netanyahu currently in the US shoring up support for an attack on Iran, back in Israel his government is busy ensuring the 'peace process' is being read its final rites.

In the past 7 days Israel has taken four highly inflammatory decisions:

1. Announced 1300 new housing units in Occupied East Jerusalem (OEJ), in direct opposition to conditions for promoting peace,
2. Announced a proposed rail link from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv will run through the occupied West Bank, but not service the Palestinians there,
3. The Israel Land Administration has 'given' at almost no cost to local settler groups "numerous properties in the Silwan and Old City areas" in OEJ and excluded Palestinians from tendering for these lands,
4. And, their supreme court approved the construction of a Jewish-only apartment block in the Ajami neighbourhood of Jaffa whose population is almost entirely Palestinian.

These decisions should give the Australian government cause for concern as it prepares to send the largest-ever delegation to Israel "to discuss issues of mutual strategic interest". If one considers that Israel is ranked very low in comparison to all the nations that Australia trades with, one has to wonder why this part-privately sponsored trip by the Australia Israel Leadership Forum is even taking place.

The DFAT trade fact sheets for the 2009/2010 period show clearly how Israel ranks in comparison with our major trading partners.

- Israel was \$749 Million (ranked number 42 of all nations we trade with)
- China was \$82.8 Billion (1)
- United States \$33.6 Billion (3)

The question that needs to be asked then is why are 17 members of the Australian parliament, including the Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, travelling to Israel in December hosted by a private Melbourne business man?

Why are there no such delegations heading to China or the US where Australia's economic and strategic interests lie?

Will the Australian government give a commitment that it will request a 'please explain' from Israel regarding its deliberate and highly provocative acts to ensure a serious peace process can be entered in to — one that is about "peace" and not just "process"?

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