

On Saturday 11 November, Archbishop Peter A Comensoli issued a letter to 'friends of good will' expressing his concern for the growing tide of anti-Semitism in Australian society as the conflict in Israel and Gaza continues. The letter comes in the wake of violent clashes on the streets of Melbourne, and echoes calls from civic and religious leaders for an end to hate speech and a return to peaceful demonstrations.

Dear friends of good will,

The explosion of explicit antisemitism in parts of Australian society—on university campuses, in street protests, in mainstream and social media, and even among some claiming Christian belief—is shocking and deeply distressing. It speaks of the re-emergence of a latent distrust and culpable ignorance of the People of Jewish heritage, fuelled by deliberately fostered hatreds and loathing, and tied into dishonest agendas from extreme standpoints, both from the left and from the right.

None of the horror of what was perpetrated in Israel, nor any of the tragedy of what is unfolding in Gaza, justifies the perpetration of antisemitism in Australia. It does not teach our children of justice and mercy. It does not uphold and respect the dignity of people and peoples. It does not foster truth, which is necessary to set us free. The language of hatred and spite, of innuendo and slogan, is language emanating from a poisoned soul. It wounds and frightens; it belittles the lives of our neighbours.

The great Abrahamic religions believe in a God who is the Creator-Father of all human beings in His image and likeness. I also believe in his Divine Son, the man Jesus Christ, of Jewish heritage, who took upon himself this evil, so that we might be rid of it ourselves. Might we seek conversion of our souls and choose pathways where we learn to listen and speak with one another as sisters and brothers. It is the only way to reconciliation and peace.

May the Creator of all humanity reign in our hearts.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne