

The Honorable Penny Wong
Minister of Foreign Affairs

January 17, 2024

Dear Minister Wong,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Women's International Zionist Organization, WIZO Victoria, a worldwide organisation dedicated to the welfare and advancement of women and children in Israel and around the world. We have been following your recent trip to the Middle East with great interest, hope and respect for your commitment to international diplomacy and human rights.

We understand and appreciate the complexities and demands of such diplomatic visits. However, we are disheartened to learn that your itinerary does not include a visit to Southern Israel, particularly the areas affected by the tragic events of October 7th. This omission was felt deeply by our community, especially considering the devastating impact these events have on innocent civilians, amongst them women and children.

The attacks perpetrated by Hamas on innocent Israeli civilians have left an indelible mark on our collective consciousness. The brutal acts of violence, sexual assault, and murder against women and young girls are matters of grave concern that align directly with the values and mission of WIZO. Visiting these areas would provide an opportunity to witness firsthand the consequences of these attacks and send a powerful message of solidarity and support to the victims and their families.

Our Local Jewish community here in Melbourne and throughout Australia is going through what we would describe as the saddest and most challenging time of our existence. The attack of October 7th wasn't aimed only at Israelis. It was an attack on every Jew in the Diaspora, as we strongly feel its consequences.

Such a visit would be a profound gesture of empathy and understanding towards the Jewish community, especially the women and children who have suffered immensely. It would also reinforce the importance of a balanced and informed perspective in international relations and peace negotiations.

Transforming lives, together.

Stay connected



wizovic.org.au



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL
ZIONIST ORGANISATION

We, the women of WIZO Victoria, feel disappointed and view this as an insensitive omission by the government. Bearing witness is crucial, as a direct experience informs one's decision-making and future policies. We feel that not giving worthy attention to where the horrors occurred, has flavours of denial, which then presents a polarised version of reality. This lack of balanced perspective is what we find most disconcerting and unacceptable and is ignoring what we, as Australian Jews, have experienced since October 7th.

Whilst 136 Israeli hostages, among them women and children, are still held captive in Gaza, no diplomatic message can move forward without demanding their imminent release. We expect that the Australian government will place significant attention on ensuring their release and push for the Red Cross and other human rights organisations to be given access to all the hostages as a priority during this Diplomatic mission.

WIZO Victoria remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting peace, justice, and equality. We believe that visiting these areas would significantly contribute to our goals and foster a deeper understanding of the challenges of all parties involved.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and trust you will be a reliable ally during these crucial times.

Sincerely,

Ronit Chrapot
President

Hila Kwiat
Advocacy & Government Relations

WIZO Victoria

