**MEDIA RELEASE:**

**24 May 2018**

**Grotesque, Reckless Use of “Genocide” by NZ Members of Parliament.**

The Holocaust Centre of New Zealand condemns without question recent statements by a Member of the New Zealand Parliament that Israel is engaging in a genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

It is not only a grotesque distortion of the term ‘genocide’, it is factually inaccurate and highly inflammatory fuelling hate speech in some circumstances.

Genocide is a highly emotive term increasingly used with reckless abandon, guaranteed to inflame and often deliberately used to trigger strong reactions.

We need to be clear: the United Nations definition of genocide is about the intention to target a group to exterminate them - based on their race, religion, ethnicity or nationality. This was the case in Darfur, Rwanda, Kosovo, the Rohingya in Myanmar and, of course, the Jews in Nazi Germany.

There is no factual evidence that ‘genocide’ is Israel’s deliberate intention in regard to Palestine. In fact, the Palestinian population has actually increased over the last 70 years, as has the number of Arab Israelis.

The Holocaust Centre of New Zealand is not unaware of the human rights of the Palestinian people, but to equate what has and is happening in Gaza with Nazi genocide is an assertion of monumental consequence without any substantive basis in fact.

It is also a deeply irresponsible action; in tandem with such accusations of genocide we have seen a rise in hate speech of the worst kind against members of New Zealand’s Jewish community.

We invite any Member of Parliament who make such accusations to meet with us face to face to discuss genocide and to have the courage to address us directly, rather than shouting emotive slogans at public rallies or writing inciteful tweets.

**For further media comment:**

Jeremy Smith – Chair

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