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Press Release re Australian Embassy to Israel 31.10.18

Co-founders of the Centre for International Reconciliation and Peace, Pastors Norman and Barbara Miller, said in Cairns today that they express condolences for the 11 members of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh who were murdered in the worst anti-Semitic attack in US history. "Our hearts reach out to those wounded and to the families of those murdered and wounded and to the Jewish community worldwide who have been touched by this tragedy. This was a senseless, brutal attack on a peaceful people at worship. It is tragic that a 97-year-old Holocaust survivor could survive such genocide and then be killed this way."

"On the current controversial matter of moving the Australian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, we believe that Prime Minister Scott Morrison has made the right decision to give this earnest consideration," the Millers said.

"The moving of the embassy would be to West Jerusalem which is already recognized internationally as part of Israel except by those who want to 'wipe Israel off the map' or 'drive the Jews into the sea,' as has been expressed," said Pastor Norman Miller.

"We should not be dictated to in our foreign policy by Indonesia or any other nation on this or any other matter," he continued.

"For all intents and purposes, Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. It houses the Israeli Knesset or national parliament, the offices of the Prime Minister and other ministers, the Supreme Court and other national institutions. Embassies should be in national capitals. Australia already recognizes Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem and this does not affect the future status of East Jerusalem.

"It may ruffle a few feathers but since when do we run away from the hard issues or stick our heads in the ground? We need to stand up for our values and our sovereignty.

"I hope the ALP does not break with Australia's bipartisan support of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. I am reminded that in 2012, I was the endorsed candidate for the ALP for the federal seat of Leichhardt and with a letter of recognition of this from then Prime Minister Julia Gillard. However, a state ALP party official paid me a visit in Cairns and asked me my position on Israel. While I said I supported a two-state solution, which was ALP policy, I was disendorsed. I believe this was religious discrimination against me as a Christian pastor," he said.

Miller said, "Today (October 31) is the 101st anniversary of the famous Australian Lighthorse charge at Be'er-Sheva (Beersheba) Israel where, fighting alongside British, NZ and other allied forces, Australian blood was shed to break through the enemy lines and free the wells from Turkish and German hands, leading to the liberation of Jerusalem from 400 years of Ottoman rule and the setting up of a national homeland for the Jews. I was privileged to be at Be'er-Sheva for the 100th anniversary last year and in previous years."

Pastor Miller said he would be standing on the Cairns Esplanade across the road from MacDonald's on 1 Nov at 11am reading out this press statement.

Signed:

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