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Australia Bans Israeli Lawmaker Simcha Rothman for Three Years

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– *Categories: Human Rights*

Australia's Interior Minister Tony Burke has canceled the visa of Israeli Knesset Member Simcha Rothman, imposing a three-year entry ban just hours before his scheduled arrival.

Burke stated the decision was based on maintaining public safety and social cohesion. "If you are coming to Australia to spread a message of hate and division, we don't want you here," he said, adding that the government takes a firm stance against individuals who seek to cause division.

Rothman, a member of Israel's Religious Zionism Party and chairman of the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, was due to meet members of Australia's Jewish community. His visit was blocked over concerns about his opposition to a Palestinian state, support for annexing territories, and remarks about Hamas. Officials cited the potential impact on Australia's Muslim community.

In a statement, Rothman condemned the decision as a "surrender to terrorism and to the antisemitism that is raging in the streets of Australia." He said he had applied for a visa through official diplomatic channels and that his visit aimed to show solidarity with the Jewish community, which he claimed faced rising hostility.

Rothman defended his political positions, including opposition to a Palestinian state and calls for the destruction of Hamas, describing them as representative of mainstream Israeli society. He warned that Australia's move set a dangerous precedent, saying, "The State of Israel must teach the entire world, including the Australian government, how to fight

terrorism and not surrender to it – because surrendering to terrorism leads to more terrorism.”

The ban drew sharp reactions across Israel’s political spectrum. Opposition leader Benny Gantz, despite noting his deep ideological differences with Rothman, called the move “blatantly hypocritical” and criticized Australia for not addressing antisemitism with equal determination.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir also condemned the decision. Smotrich declared support for Rothman, while Ben Gvir labeled the move “a historical stain and a shame for the Australian government.”

Diaspora Minister Amichai Chikli accused Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s government of promoting discrimination and silencing free speech. “It reflects a broken moral compass, discrimination, and a grave assault on free speech,” he wrote on social media.

The visa ban follows earlier measures in June when Australia, along with Canada and the United Kingdom, imposed sanctions on Smotrich and Ben Gvir over accusations of inciting extremist violence and abuses of Palestinian human rights.

Burke maintained that Australia’s stance is aimed at ensuring the country remains a place “where everyone can be safe, and feel safe.”