

Students and workers protest Australian Broadcasting Corporation's pro-Israel reportage

Our reporters
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More than 200 students and workers rallied outside the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) headquarters in Sydney on November 17 in opposition to the state-funded network's blatantly pro-Israeli bias.

Students from the nearby University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney and University of New South Wales participated, along with some city workers. Some students travelled from Newcastle and Wollongong to join the demonstration.

Protesters chanted "Free Palestine," "Shame, shame ABC, shame, shame Albanese" and "ABC you can't hide, you're supporting genocide." They held banners and placards accusing the network of recirculating Israel Defense Force talking points and whitewashing war crimes.

It was the third demonstration outside ABC facilities in recent weeks over its Gaza reportage, none of them reported by the mainstream media. The others were held in Melbourne and Brisbane, pointing to the deep-seated anger over the pro-Zionist propaganda broadcast by the state-funded network, and the rest of the Australian corporate press.

The Melbourne demonstration was in response to the network's indifference to the death of Roshdi Sarraj, a Palestinian photographer/journalist killed by the Israeli military in October. The ABC had used Sarraj's reportage but failed to publicly acknowledge his death for more than two weeks.

Protesters on Friday were incensed over the November 13 episode of ABC-TV's "Q+A" in which host Patricia Karvelas gave the floor to arch-Zionists Mark Liebler and former Liberal MP Dave Sharma while treating Australia Palestine Advocacy Network

president Nasser Mashni with contempt. Karvelas rudely interrupted Mashni and accused his organisation of funding Hamas.

At Friday's rally Palestine Action Group member Shamikh Badra said: "My message to the media and the ABC is that we are indigenous Palestinians, not Arabs in Israel. Israel isn't defending itself [but] carrying out genocide against people in Gaza... It's ethnic cleansing, not eviction. It's Palestine, not Palestinian territories. It's resistance."

University of Sydney Student Representative Council First Nations Officer Ethan Floyd denounced the ABC and called on it "reaffirm its commitment to fair and accurate reporting on all issues." Other speakers called on those present to keep protesting, fostering illusions that the Labor government could be pressured into supporting the Palestinians in Gaza.

The Labor government is totally committed to Israel "right to defend itself" and Washington's broader militarist agenda. Likewise, the state-funded ABC, notwithstanding occasional criticisms of the government and the Murdoch media, has no independent existence. The broadcaster has always functioned as a political mouthpiece for Australia's ruling elite and its requirements.

ABC chief executive officer David Anderson made this clear in an ABC radio interview in Melbourne on November 17, a few hours before the Sydney protest.

Anderson insisted that the ABC was not biased, but its role was not to accuse anyone of war crimes, Anderson declared. ABC reporters and journalists would not use words such as "genocide" and "apartheid," when covering the conflict in Gaza but could "report" other people using these definitions, he

said.

Anderson stated: “Genocide is a claim that’s been made. It’s a serious crime. It’s an allegation of a crime [but] the IDF and Israel reject that. We don’t make rash assumptions around allegations of war crimes. But what we do is we test and challenge what those allegations are.”

Israel’s destruction of hospitals, education facilities and other vital infrastructure and the killing of over 13,000 people, half of them children, with missiles, bombs and high-tech weaponry cannot be described as war crimes or genocide, according to Anderson. They’re simply allegations, which are denied by Israel and cannot be independently verified, even though Israeli government leaders are openly proclaiming their genocidal intent.

The declaration about “independent verification” means that a genocide or war crime can only be reported categorically, long after it has occurred. That is, after Israel has completed its ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians and all of Gaza is rubble.

Of course, if such an approach were transported back in time, journalists could not have condemned the Nazi Holocaust, or any government crimes, as they were occurring. Indeed, based on Anderson’s criteria, reporters would have been obliged to give equal billing to Nazi lies as to those opposing the atrocities. As is always the case, a faux neutrality in times of war is a veil for complicity.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with two students attending Friday’s rally.

Sarah, an international student, travelled from Newcastle, two hours north of Sydney, to join the demonstration. “I’m from the Middle East and the Palestinian occupation is an issue that I grew up with. Zionism is occupation. They have no right to stay on this land. I came here today because this is the time to speak up. In the Middle East we don’t have a large platform to show people this problem, to show our perspective, the other side.”

Asked to comment on the Socialist Equality Party’s call for a unified movement of the international working class to fight the Gaza genocide, Sarah said, “You’re talking about socialism. We don’t live in an age where it has a mass power, in this new century. But I agree we should support such an ideology. We shouldn’t submit to the dominant ideology,

capitalism.”

Speaking on the mainstream media, Sarah noted that whether it was CNN, the BBC or other corporate and state outlets, “they all put forward the same thing. That is why I really agree with socialism. It has its own perspective to go against the domination of capitalism. I think capitalism is destroying our lives and families.

“I think this war is moving populations around the world. I know Palestine culturally. My dad used to read to me about the occupation. If you had come to me in September and told me people in London, New York, L.A, all of them would protest to support Gaza, I wouldn’t have believed you. But now this genocide is moving all these people around the world.”

The reason for this, Sarah added, was “today we have social media. This is a huge weapon. It is our voice.”

Linhchi, a young graphic designer from Brisbane, decided to attend the protest after seeing a social media post. She told the WSWS that she only became aware of the situation in Gaza in October.

“I wanted to come to educate myself. I didn’t want to be at home, not knowing what is going on,” she said.

“The photographs on social media are what alerted me to what is happening. Everybody was speaking about the genocide in Gaza against the Palestinians. I saw videos of children injured, people crying.

“What really hit me the most was when hospitals started to get bombed. It’s illegal and a war crime. Where do they have to go? They can’t be in their homes, they can’t be in a hospital, even refugee camps. They have no choice. They’re just being killed and forced out. It is at the point where they don’t have any food, power, water. If they don’t die from bombs, they’re going to die of starvation. It’s genocide.”



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