

Australian Broadcasting Corporation sacks journalist after Zionist witch-hunt

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In a despicable attack on democratic rights, senior management at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) summarily terminated journalist Antoinette Lattouf yesterday, apparently because she has posted critical comments on Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, as well as factual reportage debunking claims used to justify the slaughter.

The sacking is an escalation of a campaign of intimidation that has spanned the entirety of the Israeli bombardment. Critical voices in the media, the arts and even sports have been targeted in coordinated witch hunts. Mass protests defending the Palestinians have alternately been vilified and defamed or blacked-out and ignored.

The ABC has been at the forefront. Largely dispensing with its pretence of greater independence and impartiality than the corporate outlets, it has churned out continuous pro-Israeli war propaganda while responding in an aggressive and petulant manner to the slightest criticism.

Lattouf was employed on a short-term contract, to fill in as host of ABC Sydney radio on weekday mornings. Her mid-week sacking was not only unusual but could even be unprecedented at the broadcaster.

In a statement posted online yesterday, Lattouf said she was "very disappointed" by the decision. "I believe I was unlawfully terminated," she wrote. "This is not a win for journalism or critical, fair thinking. I'm currently considering my legal actions."

According to reports, Lattouf was fired because of her social media posts. As with many employers, the ABC has various regulations governing how its employees interact online, including provisions against "thoughtless" posting. Employees must "protect the ABC's reputation, independence, impartiality and integrity."

However, the most remarkable aspect of the affair is that nothing Lattouf has posted could be described as factually inaccurate or even controversial. All of her commentary, it is clear, has been carefully-weighted and considered.

Lattouf only began her fill-in job on Monday, meaning there were three days or less between the beginning of her

position and her termination. That is a narrow window indeed for objectionable content to have been posted, identified and acted upon.

In fact media reports suggest that Lattouf may have been victimised over content posted prior to her employment at the ABC.

The Murdoch-owned *Australian* newspaper reported that ABC Chair Ita Buttrose "was 'furious' with the decision to hire the anti-Israel broadcaster." Buttrose is a right-wing figure, with a decades-long history in the corporate media. Her ascension to the top of the board marked a further step in the corporatisation of the ABC.

Serious questions could be raised, of a legal nature, related to discrimination, political and otherwise. Lattouf, who is Lebanese-Australian, has previously spoken out about the sidelining of reporters from Middle Eastern and other minority backgrounds across the establishment media landscape.

The Murdoch publication, which has been at the forefront of the witch hunting of the past two months, also reported that there had been a flurry of complaints over Lattouf's appointment, from "the Jewish community."

Despite its reputation for ignoring and dismissing complaints from the public, these protests immediately reached the highest levels of ABC management and were acted on. "Jewish community," in this instance, is a cynical reference to fanatically pro-Israeli Zionist organisations, with close ties to the political and media elite.

Among her sins, listed by the *Australian*, Lattouf has previously noted well-documented instances of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) sexually assaulting Palestinian detainees. She made that point in the context of an Israeli government campaign, alleging without a skerrick of evidence that the October 7 Hamas military operation was characterised by mass sexual violence.

Lattouf also once noted that Israeli deaths were presented in a very different manner by the official press, to the far greater number of Palestinians who have been murdered since October.

She was a signatory to an open letter last month, signed by more than 300 journalists. Among other things, it called for an end to “both-sides” reportage of the one-sided mass murder being perpetrated by Israel. It emphasised the need for journalism which acknowledged that the conflict did not begin on October 7, but was a continuation of the decades-long dispossession and oppression of the Palestinians.

It appears, though, that the key issue was a report Lattouf coauthored with Cameron Wilson, published by *Crikey* last week, i.e., before she began the ABC job. Lattouf, before and after that article was released, shared links to it on social media.

The *Crikey* article was a detailed investigative examination of claims that a crowd of protesters chanted “gas the Jews” outside the Opera House on October 9. The article acknowledged that antisemitic slogans had been chanted by a small and still unidentified group which gatecrashed a larger demonstration.

However it critically reviewed the evidence that “gas the Jews” was shouted. *Crikey* published police statements, not previously reported, acknowledging there was no evidence that chant was made. The article included an expert analysis of the only video of the incident, released by the Australian Jewish Association (AJA), finding that while labeled “uncut,” it had been subjected to significant editing (see: “No evidence of ‘gas the Jews’ chant at Sydney Opera House”).

The AJA, having rejected *Crikey’s* requests for information on the origins of the footage, has launched a vicious slander campaign.

On Tuesday, the day before Lattouf was sacked by the ABC, the Murdoch-owned *Herald Sun* published a scurrilous article. It cited AJA president David Adler, who described Lattouf, as well as several other women, as “useful idiots for jihadists.” Lattouf had indicated she was seeking advice from defamation lawyers.

The *Crikey* article was scrupulously factual, the kind of investigative reporting deserving of awards and accolades. It has touched a raw nerve, however, because it has exposed the cynical and lying campaign to slander all opposition to Israeli war crimes as antisemitism.

The *Australian* cited one complaint, which it indicated had been transmitted to ABC managing director David Anderson.

The unnamed complainant, with a direct line to top management at the public broadcaster and a ready platform in the Murdoch media, wrote: “I am troubled by Ms Lattouf’s bias as evidenced by her stance on opposing the authenticity of the ‘gas the Jews’ chants at the Sydney Opera House... Her actions, in my opinion, contribute to a rewriting of history that is not only inaccurate but also

harmful.”

Lattouf had investigated, as a journalist, whether the chant was made. To the influential complainant, however, any critical examination of official and Zionist narratives apparently constituted a thought crime deserving of immediate punishment. These are arguments befitting of a police state.

In a separate case, it was announced last week that the ABC’s “Triple J” radio program had taken “disciplinary action” against guest host Miss Kaninna, after the ABC ombudsman determined she had breached “impartiality” guidelines on a November 24 episode.

The indigenous Hip Hop artist, who recently won the program’s “Unearthed Artist of the Year” award, committed the unpardonable sin of describing Israel’s actions in Gaza as a “genocide.” Kaninna’s characterisation aligns with the statements of authoritative international legal experts, as well as the blood-curling declarations of Israeli politicians that all Gazans are “animals” who should be killed or displaced.

Kaninna had also played British rapper Lowkey’s track, “Long Live Palestine,” and had called for the freedom of the Palestinians. Guest host programming has been scrapped for the rest of the year, and the November 24 episode has been scrubbed from the internet.

Had Lattouf and Kaninna legitimised the killing of 20,000 Palestinian civilians, half of them children, their actions would have passed without critical commentary. They would have been part of a broad media stable, completely corrupted by its proximity to power, and willing to justify any war crime, no matter how heinous.

But because they spoke out courageously, they are being targeted. All media workers and artists should come to their defence. Those in the official press, who retain any independence from the pro-war government and any decency, must take a stand by speaking out and by preparing industrial and political action against the repression and the pro-war propaganda.

Such a struggle will not come from the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), which covers the sector. Like the other unions, corporatised and aligned with the pro-genocide Labor government, it has not lifted a finger against the censorship or taken any clear position against the mass murder in Gaza.



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