

# Australian journalist fights back against sacking for exposing Israeli crimes

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Late last week it was reported that journalist Antoinette Lattouf had finalised her submission to the Fair Work Commission industrial tribunal against her sacking by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in December.

Lattouf was terminated three days into a short-term position filling in as a host of ABC Radio Sydney on weekday mornings. It was rapidly made public that the sacking had been prompted by her social media postings, which the ABC has alleged violated its stringent employee guidelines.

In reality, Lattouf was targeted for objective commentary, as well as potentially earlier reportage related to aspects of the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and the related pro-war propaganda blitz in Australia and the other major Western countries.

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH), in her updated and finalised case, Lattouf “alleges the reasons for dismissal include expression of political opinion relating to a social media post, with her race also a contributing factor, being of Lebanese, Arab and Middle Eastern heritage, as well as being a descendant of foreign immigrants.”

Hearings are due to begin later this week, but such proceedings can drag on for a considerable period. Lattouf is filing for a clear public apology, financial damages and the offer of a commensurate position.

Extraordinarily, Lattouf was reportedly sacked for sharing to Instagram a post about a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, warning that Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war against the Gazan people. HRW is hardly a fringe body. It is well-known and has close ties to the US state and other imperialist governments.

The ABC itself published an article detailing the HRW accusations.

In a statement to the SMH, Lattouf’s lawyer, Josh Bornstein, said that following “October 7 and the ensuing conflict in the Middle East, it has become notorious in the media industry that Arab and Muslim journalists are being intimidated, censored and sacked.

“In this case we will show that the ABC has not sacked white journalists for expressing political opinion even where those journalists worked in news and current affairs.”

Bornstein continued: “Antoinette’s role at the ABC was not a news or current affairs role. She shared four posts during her employment, and was told at her dismissal that sharing the Human Rights Watch post was somehow a breach of the ABC’s social media policy. Then she was suddenly and humiliatingly sacked.”

As Bornstein’s comments indicate, senior ABC journalists and presenters have frequently posted political opinions without any repercussions. In line with the ever more openly right-wing line of the ABC and its “star” personnel, such opinions have often been of a reactionary character.

Well-known ABC reporters, who remain employed at the broadcaster, have disparaged and vilified Julian Assange, an Australian journalist who is being persecuted for exposing war crimes. Some have promoted anti-China hysteria and war propaganda, in keeping with Australia’s alignment behind a US war drive targeting Beijing.

One very prominent former reporter, while she was a public face of the ABC, waged a personal social media campaign against successful public health measures that limited COVID infections and deaths, seemingly because the restrictions impacted on her upper middle-class lifestyle.

All of those positions were given a pass, because they

aligned in different ways with the dominant narratives of the political and media establishment.

Even limited criticisms of Israel cannot be tolerated at the broadcaster because it has functioned for the past three months as an instrument of pro-Zionist war propaganda.

Senior representatives of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the Zionist regime have been given soft-ball interviews where they have been allowed to promote the murderous onslaught on Gazan civilians without any pushback.

When Palestinian leaders and individuals have been interviewed or have appeared on panel discussions, they have been besieged, in some instances with libellous allegations that they are terrorist sympathisers. Intensely hostile treatment was also meted out to Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Notably, Lattouf's case alleges that the station's content director, Elizabeth Green, told her that the termination had been ordered by David Anderson, the ABC managing director. That is a highly-political position at the centre of the ongoing corporatisation of the broadcaster, along with its evermore open alignment with government positions.

According to the SMH, Lattouf's complaint also alleges that one of the "substantial and operative" reasons for her dismissal was "because the ABC management was acting on complaints" from "the Executive Council of Australian Jewry [ECAJ] and/or one or more persons associated with that organisation." The ECAJ, a fervently pro-Israeli Zionist organisation, has rejected that claim.

There is no question that Lattouf was subjected to a witch-hunt by Zionist individuals. That was revealed immediately after her sacking by an article in the *Australian*, which cited pro-Israeli complaints against Lattouf, which the Murdoch-owned publication indicated had been transmitted directly to Anderson. That suggests that the complainants were influential.

Several Zionist groups have been given a continuous platform in the official media. That has included freedom to make highly inflammatory accusations against supporters of Palestine and Gaza.

The week before her position began, Lattouf co-authored an investigation published by *Crikey*. It indicated that viral footage of an October 9 Sydney

protest, ostensibly showing participants chanting "gas the Jews," may have been substantially edited or altered. The footage had been released by the Australian Jewish Association (AJA).

The *Crikey* report acknowledged that a small group of gatecrashers at the protest had uttered antisemitic statements. Its factual questioning of the "gas the Jews" assertion, however, pointed towards the dubious methods employed in the campaign to slander all opposition to the Gaza genocide as antisemitism.

The AJA is not an accredited or representative body. It has had ties to extreme right-wing Israeli settler groups.

Lattouf's fight against the sacking is notable, indicating a determination not to have her rights violated or to be silenced. She is taking that stand under conditions of widespread hostility to the Israeli war crimes among workers, young people and principled layers of the middle class, including in the arts and entertainment.

In an indication of a developing ferment and opposition among some journalists, ABC reporter and presenter, Nour Haydar, publicly announced her resignation from the broadcaster last Friday. Haydar told *Nine Entertainment*: "Commitment to diversity in the media cannot be skin deep. Culturally diverse staff should be respected and supported even when they challenge the status quo. Death and destruction on the scale we have seen over recent months has made me reassess my priorities."

The ABC responded with a statement, declaring: "The ABC is committed to accuracy, impartiality and fairness in our Israel-Gaza coverage, as in all our reporting." Of course, purported "impartiality" towards a genocide means covering up the historic war crimes and letting their perpetrators off the hook.



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