

Australian Broadcasting Corporation in crisis over revelation journalist was sacked at behest of pro-Israel lobby

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Management at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is in meltdown after it was revealed last week that their December sacking of journalist Antoinette Lattouf was a response to the demands of pro-Israel lobbyists.

A mass meeting of staff yesterday passed a motion of no confidence in ABC managing director David Anderson and condemned the sacking of Lattouf. Senior journalists expressed opposition to the publicly-funded broadcaster's whitewashing of Israeli war crimes in Gaza.

Initially, the ABC claimed to have terminated Lattouf, three days into a short-term radio position, because she violated its social media policy. It later emerged that the social media post in question was by the well-known US Human Rights Watch, alleging that Israel was using hunger as a weapon of war in Gaza. Lattouf simply shared the post, which was also reported on in two ABC articles.

Last Tuesday, the real character of the sacking, as the result of a politically motivated witch hunt, became undeniable. The *Sydney Morning Herald* published leaked messages from a secret WhatsApp group maintained by the Lawyers for Israel organisation.

In the messages, the Zionist lawyers plotted to have Lattouf sacked by barraging the ABC with vexatious and phony complaints. One lawyer said she would intimate a legal threat if Lattouf were not sacked while acknowledging that there were no actionable grounds for such intimidation. The chats made clear that the lawyers were in contact with and were receiving rapid replies from senior ABC executives, including the chair of its board, Ita Buttrose.

Robert Goot, the vice president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), was in the WhatsApp group and was heavily involved in the campaign against Lattouf.

The ECAJ claims to be the peak representative body of Australian Jewry. It is heavily subsidized by the state, and in October received a federal government grant of \$25 million to "enhance community safety." How a vindictive campaign against a journalist, on behalf of Israel, aids "community

safety," the ECAJ has yet to explain.

Yesterday, *Pedestrian* reported that another secret Zionist WhatsApp group, "J.E.W.I.S.H Australian creatives and academics," was also involved in the campaign against Lattouf. It too barraged ABC management with complaints. Members made call outs for others in the group to trawl through social media and find anything "anti-Israel" that Lattouf had ever posted.

One member of the group posted: "I just got an email at 5.42 from Ita Buttrose in response to my letter to [sic] ABC that 'Lattouf no longer works at the ABC.'" The individual added: "I don't know how much our emails affected the decision but I'm impressed with their power..."

Yesterday's ABC staff meeting was called by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), the union that covers the sector. According to a detailed report in the *Herald*, it was addressed by the broadcaster's global affairs editor John Lyons. The ABC had "faced one of its darkest days" last week when the Lawyers for Israel messages were released, Lyons reportedly stated.

"When I read those WhatsApp messages, for the first time ever, and hopefully the last time ever, I felt embarrassed to work for the ABC. I was embarrassed that a group of 156 lawyers could laugh at how easy it was to manipulate the ABC," Lyons said.

ABC management had capitulated to "a group of lawyers lobbying for a foreign power... The clue is in the name: Lawyers for Israel thought that they could run a campaign to bully an ABC journalist out of her job and they did, they succeeded."

Most notably, Lyons connected the sacking of Lattouf to the broader pro-Israeli line of the ABC since October 7. He noted that journalists could not describe Israel's systematic mass murder of the Palestinians as "genocide," even though Israeli state leaders have clearly enunciated a genocidal intent and are carrying out genocidal actions. If journalists did use such a descriptor, they would be "upwardly

referred” to a manager.

“We can talk to any of the victims of the Hamas October 7 massacre, which we should and we put that to air,” Lyon noted, but, “It’s only ever one side and that’s one of the things that has really motivated me that I want to speak out about.”

Staff were being “thrown under the bus,” resulting in self-censorship. “When the heat’s on, our journalists are not being supported by management. I think that’s clear... We are being attacked by outside groups, and nobody from the ABC is out there defending us. Many of us feel we are very much on our own.”

For more than three months, the ABC has uncritically relayed the talking points of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Israeli spokespeople have repeatedly been featured on ABC television, where they have justified the war crimes without any pushback. On the few occasions that Palestinians have been accorded a platform, they have been berated and treated as criminals. The same hostile attitude was directed at United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Territories Francesca Albanese.

The ABC’s support for the massacre is in keeping with the position of the Australian Labor government and the entire political establishment, full-square behind the Zionist regime. The speed with which the demands of the Zionist lobbyists were acted upon in relation to Lattouf, however, inevitably raises a question as to how directly these forces have influenced and determined the ABC’s broadcasting and editorial decisions.

The staff meeting passed a motion of no confidence in managing director Anderson by 125 votes to 3. It issued several demands, including that journalists be supported “without fear or favour” and that a transparent complaints process be developed. Other calls from the meeting touched on Lattouf’s claim that she was discriminated against on the basis of her racial and cultural background as a reporter of Middle Eastern descent.

Anderson has agreed to meet with staff at some point to purportedly address their concerns. But management has doubled down on its sacking.

Like the wise monkeys who see, hear and speak no evil, Anderson has feigned bewilderment and upset at the now well-documented allegation that management sacked Lattouf at the behest of lobbyists. “Any suggestion I would not defend our position when external pressure is applied—regardless of where that pressure is coming from—is offensive and incorrect,” he stated.

Nobody, including Anderson and Buttrose, have explained why the Zionist lawyers seemingly had a direct line to senior management, when the general public does not. Anderson, moreover, has not refuted Lattouf’s claim that she was fired

at his direct instruction.

In an update on her unlawful termination case yesterday, Lattouf’s lawyers at the Maurice Blackburn firm revealed an ABC management “backflip.” According to the update, ABC management, having previously defended its sacking of Lattouf, is now asserting that it did not terminate her at all! The rationale underlying this argument remains unclear, but likely relates to the short-term nature of Lattouf’s employment.

Lattouf responded to the ABC manoeuvre by describing it as “a taxpayer funded legal game of recent invention... If I wasn’t sacked, what was it? I’m keen to hear all the creative euphemisms that will be used to try and explain this backflip to me, ABC staff as well as Australians who are very concerned about their public broadcaster. Was I unshackled? Liberated? Untied? Subjected to a workplace imbalance correction?”

Lattouf’s determination to fightback, the support she has won from the public and the ABC staff meeting all point to a rebellion against the months-long campaign of pro-genocide propaganda and intimidation, to which the population, including critically-minded journalists, have been subjected. In addition to a widespread opposition to war crimes, there is a growing recognition that Israel’s genocide is being used as the pretext for a further evisceration of basic democratic rights.

This fight, however, will not be taken forward by the MEAA. Under conditions of rampant and unprecedented war propaganda and the censorship and intimidation of its own members, the union has done virtually nothing. That is in keeping with the character of all the unions, as corporatised entities, allied with the pro-war Labor government.

Staff at the ABC and across the media industry need to begin organising independently, including through the establishment of rank-and-file committees. A network of such committees is required to defend journalists who come under attack, including through industrial action, and to fight for the ability to report the truth of what is occurring, not to function as the propagandists of the worst atrocities of the past 80 years.



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