

Zionists using Australian medical regulator's complaint process to silence doctors opposing Gaza genocide

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23 January 2024

After months of silence, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has admitted that it is investigating complaints against 39 medical practitioners for speaking out against the Israeli military's murderous three-month bombardment of Palestinians in Gaza.

The investigations are in response to 59 complaints, mainly directed against doctors but also including nurses, psychologists, midwives, optometrists, paramedics, pharmacists and physiotherapists, many of them women and with Middle Eastern names.

The information was revealed in an article on Monday published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) and the *Age*.

According to the article, most of the complaints were anonymous. Some were from individuals claiming to be offended by the practitioners using "genocide" to describe Israel's military onslaught, a word forbidden and deemed to be anti-semitic by pro-Zionist ideologues.

While the stated purpose of AHPRA is to regulate health workers and protect the public from abuses of professional practice, its complaints process allows any individual to lodge grievances against registered medical practitioners on topics far removed from medical malpractices or dangerous procedures.

This was noted in Monday's article by Dr Jill Tomlinson, the Victorian president of the Australian Medical Association (AMA). She has called for an urgent meeting with AHPRA telling the SMH that she was concerned that the complaints process is being "weaponised."

In fact, AHPRA has previously been utilised as a mechanism to prosecute doctors and health workers, not for issues pertaining to medical treatment but for their political beliefs.

In 2022, COVID-19 deniers and anti-vaxxers used AHPRA's opaque complaint processes to witch hunt and prosecute respected remote area GP David Berger. This had nothing to do with Berger's medical professionalism or the validity of his exposure of government lies about the deadly virus.

AHPRA's investigation of Berger, including threats of deregistration, was aimed at intimidating him and other health workers who shared his concerns about the refusal of the

government to protect all Australian citizens and to pursue scientifically based COVID eradication measures.

These reactionary and anti-democratic methods have now been used by pro-Zionist vigilantes to intimidate medical practitioners in Australia. Since mid-October, these right-wing elements—aided and abetted primarily by Murdoch-owned newspapers and Sky News—have maintained an unrelenting campaign to threaten and censor health workers, teachers, journalists and artists opposing Israel's criminal assault on the Palestinians.

Various intimidation techniques have been used against doctors, nurses and other health professionals to stop them from alerting the population about the horrendous war crimes being committed by the Israeli military. This includes doxing—the public release of personal details of those targeted including their workplace, home address and pictures of them and their families including small children, on social media.

Australian Zionists, like their international counterparts, have accused medical practitioners of anti-semitism, racism, being rape apologists and terrorist supporters. These false and provocative statements, along with calls for the health practitioners to be disciplined, sacked, and even deported, have been used to whip up a lynch-mob atmosphere.

On October 24, the Murdoch owned *Herald-Sun* revealed that Zionist Federation of Australia president Jeremy Leibler had lodged a complaint against a Melbourne doctor, accusing her of downplaying the Hamas attack on the Supernova Music Festival in Israel on October 7.

The doctor also raised legitimate doubts about Israeli claims that Hamas forces had decapitated babies during the attack. The decapitation allegations, and Netanyahu government claims, have since been discredited (see: "Israel's lies about October 7 incursion fall apart").

Leibler accused the popular doctor, who provided scientifically based advice on combatting COVID-19 and had 80,000 Facebook followers of "retooling a profile she developed as a doctor during the pandemic to deny the barbaric terrorism of Hamas." She was "bringing the medical profession into disrepute."

While Monday's SMH revealed a larger than previously known numbers of complaints to AHPRA, the article provided few details about the "complaints" how the regulatory body responding. It only included brief comments from one GP and a trainee doctor who were reported to AHPRA and the Health Care Complaints Commission in New South Wales.

One GP told the newspaper that she "received a phone call and then a letter from AHPRA in November after she accused Israel of carrying out genocide against Palestinians on a closed Facebook group."

The AHPRA letter contained screenshots of the GP's comments and asked her to "provide a written response that would be presented to the Medical Board of Australia... The doctor said she spent many hours writing a three-page response to the complaint and had not heard back from AHPRA about the outcome."

A trainee doctor, who has lost five relatives in Gaza, was reported for posting benign social media guidelines to a similar group. She said: "It is coordinated targeting to silence and cause distress to doctors speaking out about Palestine. People have joined this [Doctors for Palestine] group with malintent ... to capture information and use it to report to AHPRA and for doxing accounts."

The SMH then quoted an AHPRA spokesperson who downplayed the 59 complaints against practitioners and said these did not require "formal investigation to date." It was common, he insisted, "for these complaints to be closed either before or soon after AHPRA had let a practitioner know that someone had raised a concern."

The spokesperson appeared to be making a distinction between the "inquiries" they confirmed were being made in response to the complaints, and a "formal investigation." Without further elaboration, for those targeted this would appear to be a distinction without much of a difference.

These claims were not challenged or probed by the SMH in a clear attempt to cover up the extent of the political witch-hunting. The SMH, moreover, attempted to present AHPRA as a benign institution, which is certainly not the reality for anyone targeted by the regulator.

AHPRA, in fact, has long been criticised for its arbitrary and anti-democratic investigations which lack due process for the accused, provide no right for them to face their accusers and outline only limited avenues of appeal.

Such is the distrust of AHPRA that the Victorian branch of the Australian Medical Association, in July 2022, called for a royal commission into its arbitrary powers and the dangerous impact its investigations have on the mental health of those targeted.

In March last year, an independent peer-reviewed survey of AHPRA's complaint processes revealed that there had been 20 cases between 2018 and 2021 where practitioners who were currently or recently involved in a regulatory process had attempted suicide or self-harm. Sixteen of those attempts had

resulted in death.

Yesterday's SMH article gave the final word to Anti-Defamation Commission chair Dr Dvir Abramovich, a particularly virulent Zionist. Claiming to have been shocked by some of "the hateful posts" which, he insisted, were anti-semitic, he declared: "Clinics should not be turned into battlefields and hotbeds of anti-Israel propaganda and incitement." In other words, doctors condemning the bombing of hospitals and the mass murder of their colleagues in Gaza, are somehow perpetrating "hatred."

Last November, in the lead-up to a series of school student strikes called to protest the Gaza genocide, Abramovich, who is falsely and regularly presented as a spokesperson for the Jewish community, denounced the demonstrations.

This "hate-fest and recruitment drive [that] has taken a leaf out of the Hamas playbook is using kids as human shields and sacrificing them in their war in propaganda and disinformation," he said.

Abramovich's comments are just another example of the hysteria being whipped up against all those opposing the Gaza genocide and the desperate attempts to silence health workers.

On December 9 AntiRacism Australia, a pro-Israeli front group, launched a public petition. It called on AHPRA to ban all public anti-semitic behaviour and comments on social media by registered healthcare practitioners.

The "anti-semitic" behaviour included, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" slogans, banners and placards, with the ban to be written into existing codes of conduct for each medical profession. The petition urged AHPRA to enforce "consequences" against any registered practitioners violating these codes.

These repressive demands underline the necessity for all sections of the working class to speak out against the witch-hunting and victimisation of health workers.

We urge health workers and others to share the January 17 Health Workers Rank and File Committee resolution and send statements of support to the contact addresses below. If you are being victimised, we will maintain your anonymity and privately discuss with you how to fight these attacks.

Email: sephw.aus@gmail.com

Twitter: [@HealthRandF_Aus](https://twitter.com/HealthRandF_Aus)

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/hwrfcaus



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact