

Australian Zionist organisations defend Israeli genocide, witch-hunt opponents

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Over recent weeks, the character of a series of attacks on opponents of the Israeli genocide in Gaza has come into sharp focus. Throughout the more than three-month Zionist onslaught, Australian actors, journalists, artists and ordinary people who have spoken out against the mass murder have been subjected to venomous attacks by the media and official politicians. Victims have been subjected to disciplinary actions by the employers and even sacked from their jobs.

Some of the mechanisms behind the witch-hunts were revealed earlier this month. Text messages from a secret WhatsApp group of the Lawyers for Israel organisation showed that its members had waged a coordinated campaign to have Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) journalist Antoinette Lattouf sacked, solely because of critical postings she had made about the Zionist regime.

The lawyers seemingly had a direct line to ABC management and Lattouf was fired within three days of her short-term position. Despite earlier denials, the messages, published by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, indicated extensive involvement in the WhatsApp group by Robert Goot, vice-president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Goot's alleged involvement has significance beyond the immediate issue of the Lattouf case, which is the subject of unlawful termination proceedings. Throughout the genocide, a handful of Zionist leaders have been featured uncritically in the press where they are presented as the authoritative representatives of the Jewish community. Their assertions of a mass wave of anti-semitism and their attempts to present all opposition to the state of Israel as an expression of anti-Jewish prejudice have gone unchallenged.

The Zionist leaders, however, no more represent all Jewish people than Hindu chauvinists represent all Indian-Australians, or Islamic fundamentalists all Muslims. Such depictions are always false, given that all "communities" of a religious or "ethnic" character are rent by class divisions. The Zionists, in fact, are representatives of a particularly virulent form of imperialist nationalism based on the interests of the Israeli ruling class and the major powers, especially the United States.

Their ethno-supremacist and racist ideology is encountering increasing opposition, including from Jewish people who have been prominent in the protests opposing the annihilation of the Gazans.

A brief examination of some of the main Zionist organisations underscores their intensely political character, their commitment, above all else, to the Israeli state and the anti-democratic methods they are willing to employ in pursuit of their aims.

The Zionist Federation of Australia, the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council and the United Israel Appeal

These organisations are the most open in their complete identification with and promotion of the Israeli state, though their leaders are still frequently cited in the press as though they were politically-impartial representatives of all Jewish people.

The Zionist Federation defines its role as "advocating for the State of Israel on behalf of the Jewish community in Australia and fostering a deep

connection between Australia and Israel." The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council states that among its aims is to "highlight and counteract instances of anti-Israel bias and misinformation in the Australian media and wider public debate."

Both have issued a stream of coverage and statements presenting October 7 as an act of barbaric anti-semitic violence, unconnected to the 75-year oppression and occupation of the Palestinians, and aggressively promoting the Israeli war effort as an act of "self-defence." Their commentary has sought to cast doubt on the massive civilian death toll in Gaza, has vociferously condemned descriptions of the mass murder as a genocide and has attacked international institutions for criticising Israel.

The Zionist Federation has published multiple statements denouncing teachers and other sections of workers for advocating for the Palestinians. This has included calls for disciplinary action against public sector staff for speaking out and participating in pro-Palestinian protests.

The United Israel Appeal is the Australian arm of a global non-government body. It is currently advertising campaign events entitled "Rebuilding the Dream: Uniting Hearts - Rehabilitating Israel." The organisation's ostensibly charitable works serve the Israeli state. This includes fundraising and facilitating a global program of "Aliyah and absorption," the migration of Jewish people to Israel. Aliyah is key to maintaining Jewish majority status in Israel as part of its ethno-nationalist agenda, as well as to expanding and populating illegal settlements on Palestinian land.

The Zionist Federation is involved in similar programs and boasts that it has assisted over 10,000 Australians to emigrate to Israel.

Along with these programs, the Zionist Federation and the United Israel Appeal run various operations, particularly targeting young people, such as "birthright" tours, where Jewish teenagers and young adults are sent to Israel on expenses paid trips to indoctrinate them in Zionism.

In all three organisations, Mark Leibler, a taxation lawyer from Melbourne, features prominently. Leibler is the national chairman of AIJAC and Life Chairman of the United Israel Appeal. He was president of the Zionist Federation for more than a decade, a position now held by his son, Jeremy Leibler.

In November, *Michael West Media* published a speech Leibler had apparently prepared for a 2018 meeting of the Jewish Community Council of Western Australia. It is a remarkably candid account of pro-Israeli lobbying tactics.

Leibler recalled that in the 1980s, Labor Foreign Minister Bill Hayden was due to open an exhibition of Palestinian art. Leibler successfully "lobbied" for Hayden to back out, based on private conversations.

Leibler also stated that "Having Hayden on-side was crucial to the success of lobbying efforts I led on behalf of the Zionist Federation to have Australia support the worldwide campaign to rescind UN Resolution 3379." That resolution had branded Zionism as a "form of racism and racial discrimination." Leibler said that Hayden's support was particularly important because he was a supposed "left," whereas Labor Prime

Minister Bob Hawke was openly associated with American imperialism and the Israeli state.

Leibler recounted a backroom campaign he led against the ABC's decision to post Sophie McNeil as a Middle Eastern correspondent. "She should never have been given this posting by the ABC because she was ideologically attached to the Palestinian cause," Leibler stated. While McNeil was not terminated, "[O]ur representations, both public and private, undoubtedly moderated her behaviour because she knew she was being watched."

In 2010, a controversy erupted when it was revealed that agents of Mossad, the Israeli spy agency, had used forged Australian passports while carrying out assassinations of Palestinian leaders in the Middle East. Then Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd responded by expelling the Mossad station chief from Australia in a bid to diffuse shock and anger over the news.

In a 2018 book, entitled "The PM Years," Rudd claimed the expulsion had angered Leibler and other Zionist leaders. Rudd invited them to the Lodge, the prime minister's residence, for dinner. In an account disputed by Leibler, Rudd wrote:

"I sat there politely as Mark Leibler berated me for having committed such a hostile act. I found this remarkable, as I had been a strong defender of the state of Israel from the earliest days of my diplomatic career and had always been a vigorous campaigner against all forms of anti-Semitism. And for Leibler to attack the democratically elected prime minister of his country as he sought to argue the interests of another country was beyond the pale."

According to Rudd, after further arguments, Leibler stated: "Julia is looking very good in the public eye these days, Prime Minister. She's performing very strongly. She's a great friend of Israel. But you shouldn't be anxious about her, should you, Prime Minister?" Several weeks later, Rudd was deposed in a Labor party-room coup and replaced by Julia Gillard.

The Labor and union apparatchiks who orchestrated Rudd's removal were, above all, acting on anger from the US government that Rudd's calls for American imperialism to reach a *modus vivendi* with China cut across their plans for a massive military build-up in preparation for war. The key architects of the coup were later exposed in diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks as "confidential sources" of the US embassy.

There is no indication that the Mossad expulsion was a central factor, but the discussion, if it occurred, is nevertheless notable as indicating that Leibler is hooked into powerful networks.

In 2017, Leibler personally introduced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he addressed the Central Synagogue of Sydney. Leibler referred to the Israeli leader on first name terms and indicated that they had worked together extensively before.

In October, six former Australian prime ministers, including Rudd, issued an open letter defending Israel as it was already raining down bombs on Gaza and conflating opposition to the genocide with anti-semitism. The only living former prime minister not to have signed the letter, Paul Keating, stated that it had been written entirely by Leibler.

The influence that Leibler exercises seems extraordinary for a taxation lawyer, even one who is particularly adept at lobbying and well-connected. In the reception he receives from political leaders, and even prime ministers, there is a sense that he represents something more powerful than himself and the organisations he heads. It is the reception that might be accorded to a state dignitary.

A favourable profile by the *Australian Financial Review* in 2020 declared that Leibler's "behind the scenes influence... stretches right to the top of major Australian company boardrooms, through the Australian Tax Office (ATO), to the apex of this country's and Israeli politics, including a close relationship with Israel's powerful intelligence agency, Mossad."

Leibler is an honorary member of the Board of Governors and member

of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel. Formed in 1929 as an arm of the World Zionist Organization, it was directly involved in the establishment of the state of Israel, including through the formation of as many as 1,000 Israeli towns and villages, i.e., the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.

Wikipedia notes that "David Ben-Gurion served as its chairman of the executive committee from 1935, and in this capacity on 14 May 1948, he proclaimed Israel's independence." It is now, and has been for decades, a "parastatal organisation" of the Israeli government.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry

Unlike the above organisations, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's relationship to Israel and Zionism is slightly more masked, but only slightly. The ECAJ claims to and is recognised by a number of entities as being the peak representative of the Jewish community. In that capacity, it maintains a monitor of anti-semitic incidents and is involved in ensuring there is adequate security at synagogues and other Jewish institutions.

However appropriate these initiatives may be on their own, they are all compromised by the ECAJ's Zionist politics. Its vice-president Robert Goot was not lobbying to have Lattouf sacked from the ABC to defend Jewish safety or to combat anti-semitism, but to advance the interests of the Israeli genocide through conspiratorial and anti-democratic methods.

Even those initiatives of ECAJ that appear to be worthy, such as the monitoring of anti-semitic incidents, are tainted by its blurring of the lines between opposition to the Israeli government and anti-Jewish racism. ECAJ, for instance, has denounced the Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment campaign, an explicitly anti-racist initiative, as anti-semitic.

The political character of ECAJ was underscored by an August 2023 statement it co-released with the Zionist Federation, condemning the Australian government for noting that East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank were "Occupied Palestinian Territories." The statement warned that "Describing East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza as 'occupied Palestinian territories' effectively denies any Jewish claim to the West Bank and Jerusalem." In this instance, the argument was not with the Labor government and its mealy-mouthed rhetoric, but with international law, which is crystal clear on the illegal character of the Israeli occupation.

Some of the personnel of ECAJ also have backgrounds suggesting extremely close ties to the Israeli state and its agencies.

The sole listed "public engagement officer" of the organisation, Ronit Gabriel, is an Israeli. An ECAJ biography states that Gabriel: "served as a policy advisor at the Permanent Delegation of Israel to the OECD and as a defence cooperation coordinator at the Defence mission in Paris. These positions gave her valuable experience advancing Israel's interests internationally. In 2019 Ronit moved to Australia to take the role of cultural and academic advisor at the Israeli Embassy in Canberra, an excellent opportunity to get to know the richness and diversity of Australian society and heritage." From there, she became an ECAJ representative in Canberra.

To describe Gabriel as an Israeli agent, or as someone who until very recently was an Israeli agent, is not even an accusation, but simply a statement of her publicly available biography.

Because of its status as a Jewish representative organisation, ECAJ is heavily subsidised by the government. In October, two months before Goot was involved in a campaign to sack a journalist for the sin of criticising Israel, the Labor administration announced a \$26 million funding grant to ECAJ.

The Anti-Defamation Commission

Originally established by the B'nai B'rith Jewish cultural organisation, the Anti-Defamation Commission, like ECAJ, specialises in confusing the distinction between anti-semitism and anti-Zionism.

This is not a new phenomenon. A 2012 opinion piece by Michael Brull,

posted on the ABC website, noted the ADC's aggressive advocacy of targeted surveillance of the Muslim community. The article recounted instances in which the ADC had written to news outlets condemning critical coverage of Israel as a supposed expression of veiled racism.

Brull bluntly wrote: "The ADC is not an anti-racist group. It is a group that aims to peddle Israeli propaganda."

What was true in 2012 is even truer today. Current ADC director Dvir Abramovich is perhaps the most bellicose and aggressive of the Zionist leaders. In his public commentary, he frequently employs military analogies to describe pro-Palestinian protests, organising and the exercise of other basic civil liberties.

When school students held small strikes against the genocide in November, Abramovich declared: "Free Palestine, the group that is organising this hate-fest and recruitment drive has taken a leaf out of the Hamas playbook in using kids as human shields and sacrificing them in their war in propaganda and disinformation." The activists had "torn up the rulebook" and "crossed every red line," meaning that "all bets are off."

In a *Sydney Morning Herald* article this week about a Zionist campaign victimising doctors who speak up against the mass slaughter in Gaza, Abramovich said: "Clinics should not be turned into battlefields and hotbeds of anti-Israel propaganda and incitement."

Abramovich's ravings would not be tolerated for a minute were he an Islamist rather than a Zionist. Any objective observer would have to conclude that the ADC chair is not combatting hate speech and incitement, but is veering towards the precise opposite.

The Australian Jewish Association

The AJA, while sharing the Zionist politics of the organisations above, has frequently come into conflict with them because of its particularly crude and right-wing activities.

That included AJA President David Adler extending a public invitation to take Lauren Southern on a tour of areas of Sydney and Melbourne with large Jewish populations. Southern is a Canadian fascist who has peddled the anti-semitic "great replacement theory," which posits a Jewish conspiracy to flood "European" populations with immigrants. The AJA was attracted to Southern over a shared Islamophobia.

AJA representatives have posed with and congratulated Senator Pauline Hanson, leader of the xenophobic One Nation Party. In 2018, then-extreme right-wing Senator Fraser Anning called for a "final solution" to the "immigration problem," clearly channelling Adolf Hitler. The AJA rushed to defend him and claim that his comments had been taken out of context.

According to its opponents, the AJA has a handful of members. A fringe organisation, it is noteworthy only because for a group that has advanced such questionable positions, it continues to be cited uncritically in the press.

The influence of the various Zionist organisations is not the result of their brilliant politicking and lobbying. In the case of the campaign against Lattouf, what was striking is how crude and transparently political it was. The significant thing was not the campaign per se, but the response of ABC management to it.

The Zionist leaders are prominent, and accorded graces to the extent that Israel is a critical outpost of American imperialism, the Australian ruling elite's closest ally. The Labor government, together with the entire political establishment, supports the genocide in Gaza, as it supports the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and the preparations for a catastrophic conflict against China in this region.

At the same time, the Zionist groups function as useful attack dogs of a broader campaign to suppress opposition, especially to war, among ordinary people.

The unmasking of their dirty tricks operations and ties to the criminal

Israeli state is a component of the fight to defend democratic rights and to build the socialist and internationalist movement of the working class required to end the genocide and the threat of world war.



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