

Australia's new "special envoy" on antisemitism supported Israel's bombing of hospitals

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Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday announced the appointment of businesswoman Jillian Segal to the newly created position of the government's "Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism in Australia."

The decision is highly provocative. The Labor government is making a mockery of the struggle to combat the scourge of genuine antisemitism, as it promotes the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and deliberately conflates opposition to massive war crimes with anti-Jewish racism.

Segal is a representative of the pro-Israel lobby. The business executive and lawyer has explicitly defended the fascist crimes of the Zionist regime, including those that openly violate international law and involve the systematic dehumanisation of the entire Palestinian population.

The position recalls George Orwell's Ministry of Truth. If the new post were labelled accurately, it would be titled something like "Albanese's Special Envoy to Promote Ethnic Cleansing and Repress Popular Opposition."

That is made clear by Segal's "qualifications" for the role. She is the past president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), a position Segal appears to have stood down from in late November.

The ECAJ styles itself as a representative body of the Jewish population in Australia, and on that basis receives substantial government funding. That included a special \$25 million grant from the Labor administration in March.

In reality, ECAJ functions as an attack dog of the Israeli state. That includes the aggressive promotion of every act by the Israeli military, no matter how criminal, and involvement in dirty tricks operations targeting critics of the Zionist regime.

The organisation's proximity to the Israeli government is underscored by the fact that its sole listed "public

engagement officer," Ronit Gabriel, is an Israeli citizen. Her only prior work experience is as a senior Israeli state operative, including "as a defence cooperation coordinator at the Defence mission in Paris."

As ECAJ president, Segal was heavily involved in whipping-up a pro-war hysteria in the aftermath of October 7 and justifying Israel's carpet bombing of Gaza.

Most notorious in this regard was a November 12 statement she co-issued with Jeremy Leibler, president of the Zionist Federation of Australia. Amid global shock and horror over Israel's bombing of hospitals in Gaza, Segal and Leibler explicitly asserted Israel's right to target medical facilities.

The statement condemned mealy-mouthed comments by Labor's Foreign Minister Penny Wong. "[W]e refer to the Minister's assertion that the hospitals and medical facilities that Hamas burrows itself into are protected under international law and her call for Israel to 'cease the attacking of hospitals,'" Segal and Leibler wrote.

Parrotting the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, they asserted that Shifa Hospital, the largest medical complex in Gaza, was a Hamas base and thus a legitimate target. Adopting the Big Lie techniques typical of fascist ideologues, the two Zionist leaders asserted that unspecified "other hospitals" were also Hamas bases, essentially giving a carte blanche for all medical facilities in Gaza to be bombed.

After Israel obliterated Shifa, killing hundreds, including the sick and wounded, it was unable to provide a skerrick of evidence that the hospital had any connection to military activities whatsoever. Segal, however, has never repudiated her false assertions.

Most relevant to her new position, Segal had written in her statement with Leibler: "The libel that any Israeli attack on Gazan hospitals from which Hamas operates

would amount to war crimes only serve to demonise the state of Israel and its supporters.”

That is, the new “special envoy to combat antisemitism” apparently thinks that opposing the bombing of hospitals is a “libel” and presumably antisemitic!

Segal’s advocacy of Israeli criminality did not begin in October. Last August, she and Leibler issued another statement bemoaning the Labor government’s description of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem as the “Occupied Palestinian Territories.” That designation, they complained, “effectively denies any Jewish claim to the West Bank and Jerusalem,” adding that “Describing the territories as ‘Palestinian’ not only pre-empts the outcome of negotiations but is counterproductive.”

In this instance too, Segal’s argument was not with the Labor government’s cynical and mealy-mouthed rhetoric, but with international law, which is crystal clear on the illegality of Israel’s occupation. There were no “negotiations” in August, nor are there now. Instead, there is a massive Israeli campaign to expand settlements in the West Bank and to ethnically-cleanse all Palestinians, a crime that Leibler and Segal’s statement effectively endorsed.

Aside from this record, which could be expanded on, there are questions to be raised about Segal’s present affiliations. Her publicly-available LinkedIn profile lists two current postings, which could surely constitute a conflict of interest.

Segal chairs the New South Wales branch of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, which promotes economic ties between Australia and the Zionist regime. Segal is also the chair of the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority, which oversees the work-related expenses of federal parliamentarians, including the Labor government representatives who just appointed her as special envoy.

In addition, Segal’s prominent ECAJ affiliation may continue into the present. On the “Our People” section of the ECAJ website, Segal is listed as “Immediate Past President.” An ECAJ statement dated May 3 reported that Segal had represented the organisation at a meeting with university chancellors convened by the Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education.

According to ECAJ, the meeting was called to have “an open and frank discussion on the current situation of unrest” on university campuses, by which they meant students protesting Israeli war crimes. Segal called for students and staff to inform on protesters so that

disciplinary action could be taken against them.

ECAJ favourably cited her as having “urged students and staff who witness or experience harassment, abuse or other unacceptable conduct to immediately report this to the universities so that action may be taken.” Driving home the point, “Ms Segal stressed the importance of universities upholding their respective codes of conduct and bringing disciplinary action against those found to be in breach.”

Notably, the statement hailed Albanese’s attacks on student protests. He had labelled them “divisive” displays of “hatred” that “do not have a place” in society in comments encouraging Zionist and right-wing vigilantes who were launching physical attacks on pro-Palestinian student encampments.

Segal’s participation in the May meeting is also significant because it shows she remained an ECAJ leader after the January revelation that other executives of the organisation had participated in a witch-hunt of journalist Antoinette Lattouf. ECAJ Vice President Robert Goot was in a secret WhatsApp group that successfully conspired to have Lattouf sacked from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation because she had made limited criticisms of Israel in the past.

Segal’s whole record indicates that she will function as a witch-hunter in chief. By appointing her, the Albanese government is signalling its endorsement of all of her reactionary positions, including support for the bombing of hospitals and demands for police-state attacks on protesting students.

The announcement was condemned by anti-Zionist Jewish groups, who noted that the government was weaponising false claims of antisemitism to justify the genocide. In addition to legitimising war crimes, they warned that this would undermine the struggle against genuine antisemitism, the threat of which emanates not from opponents of the Israeli war crimes, but from far-right and fascist organisations that have been cultivated by the ruling elites of all the imperialist countries.



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