

Australian establishment seizes on backward comments by nurses to escalate phoney antisemitism witch-hunt

Oscar Grenfell**13 February 2025**

Video of an online exchange between an Israeli “social media influencer” and two nurses at Bankstown Hospital in Sydney has triggered an outpouring of hysteria from the Australian political and media establishment.

The two young nurses have been denounced by leading politicians, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and their backward comments have been presented as something approaching a “national crisis.” The campaign is utterly hypocritical, prejudices the legal rights of the nurses and is being used to prosecute a broader attempt to outlaw opposition to Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza.

The exchange reportedly took place on Chatruletka, a website that connects strangers for live webcam interactions. The Israeli, Max Veifer, provided edited footage of his discussion with the nurses to Australian media outlets, which published it yesterday.

The video includes a heated exchange, with the nurses expressing their hostility to Israel’s mass murder in Gaza and its dispossession of the Palestinians. Towards the end of the clip, Veifer asks how the nurses would react to an Israeli patient. “I won’t treat them, I will kill them,” one of the nurses says, in comments that are echoed and repeated by the other.

Those statements were grossly irresponsible and politically reactionary. Online webcam and chatting platforms, however, are notorious for exaggerated statements, comments that are not intended to be taken literally and overblown arguments. The nurses were not making a public speech or a statutory declaration, but engaging in what is commonly referred to as “shit talk.” What Veifer provided to the media, moreover, were brief and edited excerpts.

Before the most cursory investigation is undertaken, there has been a national pile-on aimed at amplifying the incident as much as possible. Politicians who condemn all opposition to Israeli war crimes as a threat to “social cohesion” and insist on the need to “lower the temperature” are whipping up a hothouse atmosphere, calculated to heighten tensions in the population and justify attacks on civil liberties.

As has so often been the case, Albanese has led the charge. “The footage is sickening and shameful,” he wrote on X. “These antisemitic comments, driven by hate, have no place in our health system and no place anywhere in Australia.” Albanese noted that the nurses had been stood down and “referred to the NSW Police

for criminal investigation.” Similar comments were made by senior representatives of the NSW Labor government.

Given that investigations have only just commenced, the intervention of leading politicians is clearly inappropriate, undermining the nurses’ right to due process and tainting any objective examination of what has occurred.

Albanese’s assertion, as fact, that the nurses were motivated by antisemitism and “hate” is particularly prejudicial. The claim is contestable, given that in the footage shown, the nurses did not refer once to Jewish people, but to Israeli nationals.

The assertion is sinister, because the matter has been referred to a special antisemitism police taskforce, and the federal Labor government recently rammed laws through parliament stipulating mandatory prison sentences for vaguely defined “hate crimes.”

It is not only the nurses involved who have been impacted. Bankstown Hospital, a key facility in the working-class southwest, is swarming with police and media, something that can only intimidate and alarm health workers who had no involvement in the incident, as well as patients, many of whom are vulnerable, from migrant and poorer backgrounds.

While all of them are effectively collateral damage and politicians proclaim judgement, Veifer has not been subjected to critical examination by the media. In a rare exception, the *Daily Mail* cited the comments of a brother of one of the nurses. He stated that “The video was a set-up. You can see that it’s edited. You can see the jump cuts.” The nurse had “said those things but she was pushed. She was baited.”

Veifer’s TikTok feed features multiple videos of him on sites such as Chatruletka, “baiting” people as the nurse’s brother suggested.

Notwithstanding how he is being presented by the media, Veifer’s current “anti-racist” credentials would not withstand the slightest scrutiny. Some videos show Veifer on cam sites dressed as a stereotypical Arab. In some, he tries to trick Arabic people into making pro-Israeli statements in Hebrew.

In one video, Veifer asked some young Bangladeshi men if they “support Israel.” They replied that they were not hostile to Israeli civilians, but to the Netanyahu government because it kills children. “But every killer has a reason for his actions,” Veifer replied. “Why did you brush your teeth this morning, so they are clean,” he added, in a disgusting analogy dehumanising the

Palestinians. That was followed by standard Israeli regime talking points about Hamas.

In comments to the Australian press, Veifer has essentially admitted that his aim was to provoke the nurses into making objectionable statements, declaring “I had a mission to accomplish.” He has called for a broader witch-hunt, stating “I exposed two nurses, but how many others are there?”

Veifer, in other words, is a supporter of Israeli war crimes and a Zionist provocateur.

That does not justify the statements of the nurses, but it is surely relevant context. So too is the fact that one of the nurses has reportedly lost as many as 70 family members to Israel’s current onslaught against Gaza, and that both of the health workers have apologised for their statements and expressed their regret.

More generally, who is Albanese or any other establishment politician to “condemn” and “take offence”?

They have actively aided Israel, politically, diplomatically and materially, as it has massacred tens of thousands of people in massive war crimes, not to mention their direct responsibility for Australian involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Australian troops committed documented war crimes, including extrajudicial killings in the latter, where one of the nurses was born.

Albanese rushed to condemn the stupid comments of two lowly health workers. But he has repeatedly refused to condemn President Donald Trump’s declarations over the past week that the US will ethnically cleanse Gaza of Palestinians and seize it, in a Hitlerian plan that violates international law. Instead, Albanese has pledged to work closely with the fascist Trump.

Nor did the Albanese government condemn the open and bloodthirsty comments of then-Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant who declared on October 9, 2023 that: “We are fighting human animals and we will act accordingly... there will be no electricity, no food, no fuel. Everything is closed.” Nor those of fascistic US Senator Lindsey Graham: “We are in a religious war here... Do whatever the hell you have to do... Level the place.”

Politicians, Labor and Coalition alike, have also condemned the nurses for allegedly violating the Hippocratic Oath, including its insistence that health practitioners do no harm to patients. That is a bedrock principle of healthcare, but it has been trampled underfoot by governments.

While the levelling of the entire health system in Gaza and the targeted murder of hundreds of health workers in the besieged land has occurred without comment by the Labor government, in Australia they have gutted health funding, creating a perpetual and deepening crisis in the public hospitals.

The Albanese government oversaw the elimination of all COVID safety measures, on the grounds that they were an impediment to corporate profit-making, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths. The “let it rip” program is explicitly premised on allowing death to occur, especially of the elderly and the vulnerable.

That agenda, and the broader assault on health, has been facilitated by the Labor-aligned and thoroughly corporatised health unions. They too have joined the witch-hunt against the nurses. This morning, the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives’ Association (NSWNMA) leadership cancelled a scheduled protest

over Labor’s attacks on pay and conditions, instead holding a “solidarity action against hate speech” over the nurses’ comments.

In 16 months, the NSWNMA has issued three mealy-mouthed statements on Gaza, as Israel has systematically destroyed all of its health facilities.

The manifest hypocrisy of the official response shows that other agendas are at work. The real preoccupation of governments and the media is to falsely tar widespread opposition to the genocide as antisemitism, and to suppress it. Labor is currently presiding over the persecution of academics who have spoken out against the Israeli war crimes, including by threatening legislative changes so that they can be sacked.

The aim of the campaign was spelled out in a comment in the Murdoch-owned *Australian* this morning, which was headlined “Jewish lives more important than freedom of speech.” It called for the imposition of wartime censorship measures and restrictions.

The article favourably referenced such measures in World War II, when “Freedom of expression was limited by a battery of restrictions ranging across the disclosure of military secrets, sedition, open support of the enemy and speech designed to undermine national morale and security.” That is, behind the phoney references to antisemitism, an attempt is being made to institute police-state measures targeting opposition, not only to the genocide, but to war and militarism more broadly.

The struggle against genuine antisemitism and all forms of backwardness will not be led by politicians and media outlets clamouring for dictatorship, supporting the mass murder of Palestinians and pledging to collaborate with the fascist Donald Trump.

Instead, such a struggle means a fight to unify the working class, regardless of national origin, against capitalism and all of its political representatives.



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