

Australian court rules ABC illegally sacked journalist for opposing Gaza genocide

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The Federal Court yesterday ruled that the state-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) acted unlawfully when it sacked journalist Antoinette Lattouf in December 2023, ostensibly because she shared a Human Rights Watch post condemning Israel's use of starvation against the Palestinians in Gaza.

Justice Darryl Rangiah upheld Lattouf's claim that she had been terminated because of her political opinions, in contravention of workplace legislation contained in the Fair Work Act. The ABC had also breached its own enterprise agreement, including by denying Lattouf the opportunity to respond to its vague and false allegations of misconduct before sacking her.

Rangiah found that "the decision was made to appease the pro-Israel lobbyists," who had bombarded the ABC with vexatious complaints demanding Lattouf's termination. He thus rejected the various pretexts for the sacking put forward by the broadcaster's management.

The judgement is not only a damning indictment of the ABC and a vindication of Lattouf. It is an exposure of the entire political and media establishment, extending from the federal Labor government to the press and every institution of official society.

For the past 19 months, all of them have joined hands to fraudulently brand mass opposition to the Gaza genocide, and Australia's complicity in it, as "antisemitism." That line is itself antisemitic, conflating the Jewish people, many of whom oppose the genocide, with a militarist garrison state that is perpetrating some of the worst war crimes since the Holocaust.

Artists, athletes, medical workers and ordinary people who have spoken out against the war crimes, including in mild terms, have been subjected to intense vilification, witch-hunts and victimisation. In a complete inversion of reality, the most bellicose supporters of Israel's war crimes in the Zionist lobby have been presented as aggrieved and embattled victims, their every lie broadcast far and wide.

The Lattouf ruling is an exposure of both the fraudulent character of this campaign and its lawlessness, which

threatens fundamental democratic rights.

Speaking outside court after the judgement, Lattouf stated that she had been "punished for my political opinion."

"In December 2023, I shared a Human Rights Watch post because Human Rights Watch found that Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza. It is now June 2025 and Palestinian children are still being starved. We see their images every day, emaciated, skeletal, scavenging through the rubble."

As those comments indicated, the most striking aspect of the Lattouf case is that she was persecuted for sharing the truth, via a prominent US-based human rights organisation.

For that "offence," Lattouf was not only sacked, but was subjected to significant reputational harm. She was compelled to embark upon a legal battle to effectively clear her name, which spanned the best part of a year and a half. Justice Rangiah ordered the ABC to pay Lattouf \$70,000 in compensation, after accepting her account that the sacking had taken a major personal toll, including on her mental health.

The other stark element is that the Federal Court proceedings, while they provided additional detail, largely confirmed what had been publicly known since January 2024. In that month, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) published an article exposing the inner workings of the campaign to have Lattouf sacked and the response of ABC management.

Lattouf had been hired for a five-day fill-in position, presenting an ABC Radio morning show while the regular host was on leave. As soon as Lattouf began the role, ABC management was deluged with complaints, alleging that she was an antisemite and demanding that her position be terminated.

The SMH article showed that those complaints were not spontaneous. They were organised in a WhatsApp chat of Lawyers for Israel, a group that, as its name suggests, was composed of legal professionals dedicated to supporting the Zionist regime.

Among those participating in the chat was one of the top

executives of a peak Zionist organisation, which receives substantial federal government funding on the basis that it is a representative body of the Jewish community. In the chat, that individual revealed that he had a source within the ABC, who was reporting back to him on the progress of the campaign against Lattouf.

Correspondence between senior managers, tendered in evidence, showed that the ABC was aware, almost immediately, that the complaints were coordinated, with their substantive content virtually identical.

ABC management, Rangiah found, had been thrown into “a state of panic” by the complaints. The court heard that the night of Lattouf’s first day of employment, David Anderson, the ABC managing director, had begun trawling through her social media posts.

He texted the ABC’s chief content officer Chris Oliver-Taylor, “I think we have an Antoinette issue.” Her “socials are full of anti-Semitic hatred,” Anderson asserted. Under conditions where Israel was carrying out the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through mass murder, Anderson absurdly wrote: “I’m not sure we can have someone on air that suggests that Hamas should return to their ethnic cleansing in Gaza and move onto the West Bank.” Those statements were utterly false and of a highly political character.

As the Zionist lobbyists continued their campaign, Ita Buttrose, the chair of the ABC’s board, emailed Anderson that she was “over” receiving the complaints. Of Lattouf, she asked, “Can’t she come down with flu or COVID or a stomach upset? We owe her nothing.”

On the afternoon of the third day of her position, Lattouf was sacked, ostensibly because of the Human Rights Watch post. Rangiah found that Oliver-Taylor had carried out the dismissal, but that Anderson had made a “material contribution” through his labelling of Lattouf as antisemitic.

In the hearings, the claims of ABC management that Lattouf had been given a “direction” not to post anything to her social media related to Israel or Gaza were exposed as false. Lattouf’s immediate manager, who had supposedly issued that “direction,” said that it had simply been informal advice. In the course of the hearings, other elements of the ABC’s defence similarly collapsed, with senior managers unable to substantiate hazy suggestions that Lattouf had violated the broadcaster’s editorial or social media policies.

The ABC’s defence combined elements of the absurd with patently anti-democratic arguments. The ABC initially claimed that it had not sacked Lattouf, because she had only been employed in a fill-in position. In Orwellian fashion, it asserted that the prohibition on firing someone because of political opinion only covered opinions privately held, not opinions publicly expressed.

In an X post yesterday, one of Lattouf’s senior legal

representatives, Josh Bornstein, stated that the ABC had rejected an offer of a settlement in July 2024, very similar to the eventual Federal Court judgment, for an apology, \$85,000 in compensation and five radio shifts. He surmised that the ABC had proceeded with the court action, so as to effectively “blacklist” Lattouf.

The case has further exposed the extensive erosion of democratic rights, associated with the Gaza genocide. As they support genocide, imperialist governments around the world, led by Labor in this country, are enacting measures that have historically been associated with dictatorships.

This year, both the federal government and the NSW Labor administration passed sweeping “hate speech” legislation, potentially outlawing strident condemnations of Zionism, on the pretext of a “wave of antisemitic” graffiti incidents, which were later exposed as a hoax. The NSW laws could be used to ban all protests, by vaguely barring demonstrations anywhere in the proximity of a place of worship.

The attacks go beyond the immediate issue of Gaza, as significant as that is. As the WSWs has insisted, the genocide is one component of a developing global war, including the US-Israeli onslaught on Iran, Washington’s proxy war with Russia in Ukraine and the advanced preparations for a catastrophic conflict with China in the Indo-Pacific.

The fight against war and dictatorship requires the independent mobilisation of the working class, in Australia and internationally, against the ruling elites, their governments and a capitalist system that is once again vomiting up the barbarism of the 1930s, from genocide to authoritarianism and world war.



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