

Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

Submission No: 247

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Publication: Making the submission and your name public

Submission to the Inquiry into the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

Preamble

I was shocked and saddened by the murders of 15 people by two gunmen at the Bondi Beach Hanukkah celebration in December 2025. It was, it seems, targeted at the Jewish community and an act of terrorism.

I do wish to emphasise that this was perpetrated by two men who apparently were members of a terrorist organisation, ISIS, and they were not, as far as we know, associated with the pro-Palestine movement or protests in any way. Their actions on that day reflected extreme antisemitism and I condemn them absolutely.

I do not, however, agree with the persistent attempts by some to link protests against the genocide¹ by Israel of the Palestinian people with the Bondi Beach terrorist attack. This is a politicisation of the attack and I object to it strongly. I regard it as a particularly repugnant way to undermine the anti-genocide protests and protestors who get out on the streets week after week in order to protest peacefully about the actions of a powerful state against the powerless. It is also to be remembered that there is a sizable proportion of the protestors who are Jewish and who do not agree with the genocide of Palestinians. We walk side by side, Jews, Muslims, Christians, atheists, all religions and no religion, all ethnicities, all genders, all ages.

Specific points of discussion

My submission specifically addresses certain objectives of the Bill, not all of them. These are the objectives related to the strengthening of ‘the prohibition of the public use of hate symbols’ and ‘expressions used to incite discrimination, hostility or violence towards certain groups’.

¹ See <https://www.un.org/en/genocide-prevention/definition> and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds> and <https://theconversation.com/overwhelming-evidence-of-genocide-against-palestinians-a-legal-expert-unpacks-the-un-report-on-gaza-266083>

I am concerned that the Bill will result in symbols that are not ‘hate symbols’ but are those of organisations classified by governments as ‘terrorist’ being banned. Will the Queensland Government, for example, be able to classify an activist organisation that is pro-Palestine as ‘terrorist’ and then ban any and all symbols associated with it? And result in anyone who uses those symbols in public (for example, in protests) being arrested and possibly charged and imprisoned? Given the actions of the British Government in categorising Palestine Action Group as a ‘terrorist’ organisation², and the subsequent arrest of people of all ages for supporting the group, I believe this to be a reasonable concern.

The other part of the Bill that particularly concerns me is the prohibition of particular expressions, as described here in the Explanatory Notes:

The Bill introduces a new offence for the public recitation, public distribution, publication or public display of a prohibited expression. The offence applies where the conduct could reasonably be expected to make a member of the public feel menaced, harassed or offended, and the defendant does not have a reasonable excuse. It encompasses both written and spoken use of expressions, such as chants or placards at a protest.

The notes go on to explain that ‘the Minister must be satisfied it is regularly used to incite discrimination, hostility or violence towards a relevant group’. It is obvious that this is targeted at pro-Palestinian protests and protestors and the Premier David Crisafulli has made this even more obvious with his opinion about the chants ‘globalise the intifada’ and ‘from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ being antisemitic³.

Intifada in Arabic means ‘to shake off’ and is in reference to shaking off oppression by the powerful⁴. It is not referring to harming or killing Jewish people. Fighting oppression is something that Jewish people are keenly associated with, given the history of persecution and the Holocaust by the Nazis in World War Two. ‘From the river to the sea, Palestine will be

² This has recently been ruled as unlawful. See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/feb/13/uk-ban-palestine-action-unlawful-high-court-judges-rule>

³ See for example: <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/pro-palestine-chant-hate-symbols-set-to-be-banned-in-queensland-20260208-p5o0ff.html>

⁴ See here for an explanation of the First and Second Intifadas, historical uprisings against Israeli repression: <https://decolonizepalestine.com/intro/two-intifadas-and-two-states/>

free' has been viciously mischaracterised as meaning 'kill all the Jews' by various politicians and others. Wikipedia gives a reasonable summary:

"From the river to the sea" (Arabic: من النهر إلى البحر, romanized: *min an-nahr 'ilā l-baḥr*; Palestinian Arabic: من المياه للمياه, romanized: *min il-ṡayye la-l-ṡayye*, lit. 'from the water to the water') is a political slogan that refers to the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea – an area historically known as *Palestine*, which was formerly ruled by the British as Mandatory Palestine, and which today encompasses Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The phrase and its variations have been used both by Palestinians and Israelis to mean that the area should consist of one state, rather than two (or three).⁵

When I have participated in protests and used this chant, it has been specifically defined as meaning that **all peoples will be equal and liberated from oppression**. I have read of Israeli politicians using it to mean killing all Palestinians. I think a blanket ban of phrases like these is ignoring the meaning ascribed to it by the people using it.

With reference to a member of the public feeling 'menaced, harassed or offended', how is this to be assessed? I regularly feel harassed by advertisements and by statements by politicians and other public figures; the number of times I have been offended by public statements that delegitimise and/or dehumanise women, the young, the old, Muslims, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is legion but I am not going to demand that these statements be banned. I will challenge and debate the people who make them instead.

Protests against the genocide by Israel of the Palestinian people are not anti-Jewish, antisemitic, or racist in any way; they are an attempt to convey public opposition to the mass slaughter of men, women, and children in Gaza (and the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen). And, importantly, however many of us come out to protest, there are many more who are unable to but share our concerns.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/From_the_river_to_the_sea

In summary

I cannot support a Bill that purports to restrict freedom of political expression in any way. The scope makes possible the power to proscribe political expression without democratic scrutiny, which could enable abuse of this power in the future. The small window of opportunity for the public and organisations to make submissions is also deeply concerning for such an important and potentially impactful Bill.

It conflates antisemitism with advocacy for Palestinian people, and seems to target the Palestinian community and those who do advocate for them in a time of heightened slaughter in Gaza and the West Bank. There is nothing in the Bill about protection for Palestinians or consideration for how they might feel threatened by the support for Israel's actions and daily denial of their genocide.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion via a submission to the Inquiry.

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