

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

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About Refugee Action Collective Queensland

The Refugee Action Collective Queensland (RAC QLD) is a volunteer-based community organisation formed by concerned citizens in response to the racist demonisation of asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat. We work to inform, educate and mobilise people in Brisbane and across Queensland to challenge government policies and legislation that violate the human rights of refugees and people seeking asylum.

We recognise that the demonisation of refugees cannot be separated from the broader problem of systemic racism in Australian society. It is therefore both consistent with our mission and our responsibility to comment on the proposed Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026.

Our Opposition to the Bill

The Refugee Action Collective Queensland unequivocally opposes the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026.

This bill is not a genuine attempt to combat racism. It is a dangerous expansion of state power that targets political expression and risks criminalising solidarity.

1. This Bill Criminalises Political Speech

The Queensland Government's 8 February 2026 media statement makes clear that the bill is designed to target slogans heard at pro-Palestine protests, including "From the river to the sea" and "Globalise the Intifada," branding them "terrorist slogans."

These slogans are widely debated and interpreted in multiple ways, including by Jewish people who reject the claim that they are inherently antisemitic. For many protesters, "From the river to the sea" expresses a demand for equality, freedom and full democratic rights for Palestinians living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. "Intifada" means "uprising." It has historically referred to popular resistance against oppression.

To impose prison terms of up to two years for chanting contested political slogans is an extraordinary and authoritarian escalation. Democracies do not imprison people for speech because governments dislike its message. Criminal law must not be weaponised to police political expression.

2. The Bill Scapegoats and Stigmatises a Political Movement

We unequivocally oppose antisemitism and every form of racism. But this bill does not strengthen equality before the law — it undermines it.

By singling out one form of racism in its title and framing, the bill elevates one category of discrimination while failing to address racism more broadly and consistently. This selective approach risks politicised enforcement and weakens the universal principle that all people deserve equal protection.

Even more concerning is the government's rhetoric linking advocacy for Palestinian rights with terrorism and antisemitism. This conflation effectively brands thousands of ordinary Queenslanders — including students, trade unionists, faith leaders and Jewish activists — as extremists.

Such rhetoric fuels division, not cohesion. It marginalises lawful political activism and risks exposing communities to hostility and intimidation. Legislation purportedly designed to combat hate must not itself contribute to the targeting of a section of the population.

3. Israel's Actions Are Driving Global Outrage — Not Protesters

Antisemitism must be confronted wherever it appears. But blaming the Palestinian rights movement for rising tensions ignores the obvious catalyst: the actions of the Israeli government.

Since October 2023, the Israeli military has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, including thousands of children. It has flattened residential neighbourhoods, bombed hospitals and schools, displaced the overwhelming majority of Gaza's population, and imposed siege conditions that have produced catastrophic hunger and suffering.

These are not abstract allegations. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has found that there is a plausible case that Israel is committing genocide. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in relation to alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Israel's government has carried out these actions openly and repeatedly justified them in explicitly nationalist and religious terms. When a state claims to act on behalf of Jewish people worldwide while committing mass violence, it does not make Jewish communities safer. It fuels anger, grief and political backlash globally.

Protest is a response to state violence. Criminalising protest does not end injustice — it entrenches it.

4. This Bill Sets a Precedent for Repression

The bill relies on vague and subjective definitions that grant sweeping discretion to authorities.

Today the target is the Palestinian solidarity movement. Tomorrow it could be refugee advocates, First Nations activists, union organisers, women's rights campaigners, LGBTIQ+ protesters or climate defenders. Every transformative social movement has used language that those in power found uncomfortable or provocative.

If governments can criminalise slogans because they are "offensive" or politically contested, no movement is safe.

Civil liberties, once eroded, are rarely restored without struggle.

Conclusion

The Refugee Action Collective Queensland stands firmly against antisemitism and all forms of racism. But we reject this bill because it weakens democratic rights, stigmatises political activism, and hands the state sweeping powers to police expression.

This legislation will not make communities safer. It will not reduce racism. It will chill dissent and deepen division.

We call on lawmakers to withdraw this bill and instead pursue policies grounded in equality before the law, protection of civil liberties, and genuine anti-racism.

We will continue to stand for refugee rights, Palestinian rights, for freedom of expression, and for the right of communities to speak out against injustice — without fear of criminalisation.

And we will continue to defend the right of people to protest injustice — loudly, publicly and without fear of imprisonment.