

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

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As I understand it the Queensland government aims to ban the expressions “From the river to the sea” and “Globalise the Intifada”. I have been involved in the antiwar movement since close to the beginning so I think I’m pretty clearly in a better position to judge the sense in which these phrases are generally used than anyone in the Queensland government that is making decisions about this.

Every time I've heard an activist explain what they mean by "From the river to the sea" they express support for a two state solution with equal rights for Jews and Palestinians. Whatever one thinks of this view it's the most pluralistic and anti-racist position you could possibly take and regardless of how much anyone disagrees with it to ban its expression is a threat to freedom of thought and an insult to everyone regardless of their views who trust their own capacity think these things through themselves without governments doing their thinking for them.

The decision by the University of Queensland to ban the encampment for Gaza from using the term “intifada” was an interesting one. That encampment had denounced Hamas and antisemitism and when my friend was talking to them he immediately told. Meanwhile the pro-Israeli government encampment I talked to whose speech wasn’t being policed at all was openly racist against Palestinians. They validated ethnic cleansing in explaining that opposed people who were ethnically should be denied a right of return because they don’t want to live among Palestinians (imagine how we would react if German international students set up an encampment at UQ specifically to say that they don’t think Jewish people and their descendants who were ethnically cleansed by the Nazis should have been granted a right of return because they don’t want to live among Jewish people). One of the people saying this was an educator at UQ and I haven’t seen any concern about whether this is making Palestinian students feel unsafe. More shockingly still, they argued that genocidal statements from the very top of the Israeli government were understandable under the circumstances. The encampment for Gaza reacted to the ban by organising an event to explain the history of the First Intifada and explaining the term was originally chosen during this because of its association with non-violence.

The 1998 BBC documentary “In Search of Palestine” includes partly tells the story of illegal Israeli settlers and illegal occupying soldiers forcibly taking down a Palestinian flag from a school for girls in Hebron and the increasing abuse from settlers who threw rocks at the children on their way to school that followed from this. The footage of the school shows that it was covered in graffiti of the Star of David. Moreover the entire illegal occupation of Palestine and starvation of Gaza in carried out under the Israeli flag featuring a Star of David. Yet we would all recognise the to ban the Star of David in general simply because of these appalling applications of the symbol and the trauma they have caused for Palestinians would be deeply antisemitic. The fact that the equivalent to this, of banning an expression important to Palestinian culture’s legitimate aspiration to its legal right to self-determination simply because of particular cases of terrorist application of the term none of which occurred at UQ, illustrates that profound racism against Palestinians is simply taken for granted.

These observations given that it’s not even that it is even being claimed that these expressions are being used by activists with violent intent. Chris Minns has explicitly acknowledged that it was not used by activists with violent intent even though he aimed to ban it and Jason Steinberg who Crisafulli has prominently platformed (presumably because he hasn’t criticised his rejection of serious gun control which would protect Jewish people’s safety) similarly made this acknowledgment before going on to claim that despite this the words “really” mean something violent in some obscure sense independent of the meaning of the speaker which he doesn’t explain. Giving the government the right to decide what our words “really” mean regardless of what we mean and to punish a speaker regardless of their intent of course poses a far greater danger of authoritarianism.

Although the justification for this destruction of freedom of thought is the safety of Jewish people there has been no evidence that antiwar activism has contributed to the risk of antisemitic terrorism and significant evidence that the obsession with fearmongering about antiwar activists has in fact harmed Jewish people’s safety. When I was warned that I could be monitored after the awful events at Bondi my reaction was that unlike Netanyahu, who has admitted to supporting a network of terrorists with ISIS ties which was led by a man with ISIS ties who a leaked internal UN memo described as “the main and most influential stakeholder behind systematic and massive looting” of humanitarian aid in Gaza, the only contact anyone has been able to identify between ISIS and the antiwar movement is the presence at the Sydney Harbour bridge protest of the pro-ISIS group which ostensibly influenced Naveed Akram and which was explicitly in favour of assaulting antiwar activists who they were failing recruit and acting on this principle at the Sydney Harbour bridge protest (It’s difficult to tell whether Jillian Segal is making so much of this presence because of her documented ties to the Israeli arms company Elbit Systems or because she

genuinely believes a Muslim antiwar activist who ISIS are violent towards must be in cahoots with ISIS because they are all identical), and also explicitly and categorically opposed to a Palestinian state as ISIS officially is so I wouldn't expect an intelligence agency to be stupid enough to conflate these two worlds just because various opportunists including pro-ISIS Israeli politicians pretend to perceive this link in the hopes of maximising anxiety and exploiting trauma as is the standard procedure after a terrorist attack. It turns out I was underestimating ASIO's stupidity and incompetence since the AFR was told by an anonymous source in ASIO that from the beginning these geniuses have been deprioritising monitoring stuff to do with ISIS in order to do extensive surveillance of antiwar activists and has therefore been treating them as a greater threat than ISIS. This is despite the fact that according to the anonymous source ASIO knows that they operate in different networks and despite the fact that there is evidence ASIO was told that Naveed Akram was planning to commit a terrorist attack.

I do remember thinking during an earlier wave of the moral panic about the antiwar movement that if the authorities were to actually act on the rhetoric about generally investigating the movement whenever there's an attack on a Synagogue when there's no evidence or *prima facie* reason to think that the perpetrator has any connection to activism given the numbers of people involved in the movement it could end up like "See Something, Say Something" after 9/11 which not only endangered civil liberties but harmed the investigation of terrorism by drowning the authorities in useless information, but at that time I didn't necessarily have strong reason to assume that the political atmosphere would have a dramatic impact on the way the authorities would investigate or interpret the threat of antisemitic violence and thought police may just be making a show of doing a certain amount of that to placate politicians (actually in the case of the particular attack on a Synagogue I'm thinking of the court concluded that the cause was schizophrenia rather than antisemitism but it certainly wasn't unreasonable at the time to assume that it was antisemitic and that was what I assumed, the problem was that the media was completely uniformly trying to connect far more tenuous assumptions to that one in a manner that I think would have to be actually far more hysterical than public discourse blaming antiwar activists for terrorism in even the immediate post-9/11 period or any relatively recent analogue). But now that I know intelligence agencies are not insulated from the wider political atmosphere I have to see any policy decision that presents antiwar activists as presenting a threat of terrorism is in fact placing Jewish Australians' safety at risk.