



31 MAY, 2024

Sydney Uni loses its faculties: professor teaches Hamas mass rapes were a 'hoax'

The Australian, Australia



Sydney Uni loses its faculties: professor teaches Hamas mass rapes were a 'hoax'

EXCLUSIVE

ALEXI DEMETRIADI
 NSW POLITICAL REPORTER

A University of Sydney professor has told first-year students that Hamas's mass rapes and sexual violence on October 7 were "fake news" and a "hoax" peddled by the media, and that Israel had engaged in "ethnic cleansing" propped up by Western governments that had "repressed domestic dissent".

Australia's oldest university, which has been embroiled in a month-long pro-Palestine encampment protest, and allegations that it is not doing enough to protect Jewish students and staff from anti-Semitism, confirmed it would "look into the matter as a priority" after it was alerted to it by The Australian.

Sociology professor Sujatha Fernandes told a class in April that the media was "distorting" the conflict, and the terrorist group's mass rapes on and after October 7 were a "hoax".

"Western media has played the role of an ideological state apparatus by suppressing coverage of the atrocities, peddling fake news (promoted hoaxes that Hamas beheaded babies and carried out mass rape, in order to shore up support for Israel), and distorting events," Professor Fernandes said.

The UN has said there were "reasonable grounds" to believe Hamas engaged in mass and gang rape across multiple locations on October 7.

Pramila Patten, the UN's Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, said after an investigatory visit to Israel in January: "What I witnessed were scenes of unspeakable violence (that were) perpetrated with shocking brutality."

The UN said her team found

"convincing information" that sexual violence – including gang rapes – was committed against hostages, and it had reasonable grounds to believe that it "may still be ongoing against those in captivity".

The professor's lecture, obtained by The Australian, has been slammed by Jewish and political leaders – who have said it showed the university had an anti-Semitism problem – and by students who were present in the class and said it made them feel "threatened".

Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-chief executive Alex Ryvchin said the university had to investigate the professor and he had written demanding as much.

"The use of rape and sexual torture on a mass scale to terrorise and degrade Israelis on October 7 is proven by medical evidence, perpetrator testimonies, eyewitness accounts and video evidence," he said, adding that Hamas "flaunted it as a form of psychological abuse".

"The fact that an educator would deny this to her students shows a malice and contempt for rape victims that cannot be excused.

"More so, it shows an irrationalism and inability to form evidence-based conclusions that

Continued on Page 5

Litany of lies: Hamas mass rapes were 'a hoax and fake news'

Continued from Page 1

makes this academic unfit to teach anyone. It shows a callous disregard for the wellbeing of students, some of whom may have been victims of sexual violence."

The professor, whose social-media accounts have shown her supporting the months' long

activist encampments, made the claims while using Israel as a "case study" in a lecture on "power".

Professor Fernandes did not call Hamas a terrorist group but alleged that Israel had engaged in "ethnic cleansing, collective punishment and forced starvation".

"Western governments have largely supported the Israeli government – sending arms to Israel, cutting funds to Palestinian aid organisations, and repressing dissent at home," she told the class.

Australia suspended funds to the UN Relief and Works Agency in January after allegations it had supported Hamas and homed some of its militants, although funding was later resumed.

One sociology student, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said she was "repulsed" in particular by Professor Fernandes calling Hamas's sexual atrocities a "hoax".

"After committing to four years and tens of thousands of dollars, the least I would expect are teachers who do not blatantly promote lies and foster an unsafe, threatening environment," the student said.

"I came to university for an education, not to have my safety compromised and the rights of the encampment placed above my own. These issues go way beyond the class; this tolerance for anti-Semitic ideology is institutional at the university, and leadership refuses to act."

One Jewish student, speaking anonymously given fears of reprisal, said the statements showed a "rising trend of anti-Semitism" at the university.

"(It's) a trend I feel every day, especially at the university,"



31 MAY, 2024

Sydney Uni loses its faculties: professor teaches Hamas mass rapes were a 'hoax'

The Australian, Australia



PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY
Department of Parliamentary Services
Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) licenced copy
or Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) s.48A copy

Page 2 of 3

they said. "I find it ridiculous how these same individuals will deny undeniable proof of the events of October 7, which Hamas proudly filmed themselves doing."

Opposition education spokeswoman Sarah Henderson said she expected the university to "fully investigate" the lecturer.

"Academic freedom does not mean the freedom to mislead or indoctrinate students or convey information which is not factually accurate," she said.

"There is no room for indoctrination or activism in any educational setting."

The Coalition has called for the Albanese government to instigate a judicial review into anti-Semitism at university campuses, which it has so far been reluctant to commit to.

It is the latest issue for the University of Sydney to address as it struggles to contain both the pro-Palestine encampment and concerns from the Jewish community that it is not doing enough to stamp out hate speech.

On Tuesday, vice-chancellor Mark Scott made a concession offer to encampment protesters, promising to work with them to "review" the university's ties with defence companies.

That offer was rejected by activists who called it "spin".

Professor Fernandes was contacted for comment.



31 MAY, 2024

Sydney Uni loses its faculties: professor teaches Hamas mass rapes were a 'hoax'

The Australian, Australia



PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY
Department of Parliamentary Services
Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) licenced copy
or Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) s.48A copy

SCANDALOUS LECTURE SLIDES

The New York Times
LIVE 14m ago **Israeli massacre**
~~Deaths~~ of Gazans Desperate for Food Prompt Fresh Calls for Cease-Fire

BBC
Hind Rajab, 6, found dead in Gaza days after phone calls for help
18 hours ago **killed by Israel**
Israel-Gaza war

Role of the media - ISA
Western media has played the role of an Ideological State apparatus by suppressing coverage of the atrocities, peddling fake news (promoted hoaxes that Hamas beheaded babies and carried out mass rape, in order to shore up support for Israel), and distorting events

University of Sydney sociology professor Sujatha Fernandes

