

I have been a staff member at a prominent university for a decade. During my tenure I did not witness widespread antisemitism. Although antisemitism can occur anywhere, and should be treated seriously, the recent weaponisation of antisemitism by conflating antisemitism with legitimate criticism of the actions of a state, Israel, is highly problematic and deeply concerning. Egregious accusations of antisemitism have a chilling effect on free speech and on those who advocate for human rights.

Antisemitism should not be conflated with pro-Palestinian student and staff actions on universities that are genuine and legitimate criticism of the state of Israel. Citizens and residents need to be allowed to criticise foreign states actions, especially when those actions constitute genocide, as recently determined by the United Nations Special Committee that Israel is committing genocide and the International Criminal Court issuing of arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant.

For the past year while Israel has been committing what appears to be genocide to anyone with eyes, many Australian universities have been cracking down on anti-war, anti-genocide protesters framing them incorrectly as antisemites. Australian universities following to one degree the terrible actions of the United States against its student anti-war protesters. This is terrifying and should worry us all about the state of free speech and protection for human rights activists in Australia. Universities in Australia have been found to have partnerships with the Israeli defence industry and organisations that operate on or benefit from illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and apartheid in Israel. Universities therefore have vested interests in snuffing out dissent on campus especially when students call for the university to end these financial and cooperative ties.

I know from my university that anti-war protesters were harassed in their encampments, intimidated by thugs from outside the university community who entered university premises and eventually forced to leave their protest encampments by the university. The students were falsely accused of antisemitism by the media, the university and other parties who have vested interests in spreading that false narrative. Many of the students protesting were Jewish students against the massive human rights violations of Israel, their voices have also been silenced by these chilling dog whistles of antisemitism.

At universities in Melbourne students anti-war protesters were violently attacked with flares and intimidated. Universities and police have not done enough to protect anti-war student protesters. The NSW premier and government here in NSW has also added fuel to the fire of false claims of antisemitism.

When can I ask is it safe for people to speak in support of human rights and to speak against the dehumanisation of Palestinians? Islamophobia and racism against Arabs is a much more widespread problem in Australian society including on university campuses and

it has not been adequately addressed. As a staff member at a group of eight university, I and other staff have long been aware of the bias and racism towards students of Arab and Muslim backgrounds that is the most prevalent form of discrimination in our community including the university. This is one of the reasons that the university where possible use blind marking, to reduce the unfair treatment that minorities face. Arab and Muslim students tend to be the most likely victims of discrimination.

It is dangerous to create a false narrative of widespread antisemitism on university campuses when the more prevalent problem we face day to day is Islamophobia. What this does is allows the perpetrators of violence to create an illusion of victim hood while victimising others. The real victims suffer and are painted as criminals. This is the same manipulative technique that has been used in the past during other genocides to create a community permission and acceptance of the need for disproportionate response, torture or genocide, or to create the cognitive dissonance that allows people to deny the genocide is occurring, as is happening now.