

**Submission  
No 113**

## **MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED**

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## Submission to the Parliament of New South Wales inquiry into measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred

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I am an academic in history at the University of Sydney, though I make this submission in my personal capacity, not on behalf of my institution. I have been publicly engaged on the Israel/Palestine conflict for my entire professional career and [have published commentary](#) on issues of civil liberties and intellectual freedom in the context of this conflict.<sup>1</sup> I have also written on anti-Chinese racism in Australia, including in my book *China Panic* (Latrobe University Press, 2021). I am happy for my submission to be made public.

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Banning slogans is an authoritarian technique that should have no place in Australia's democratic system. That is probably all that really needs to be said regarding the current proposal to ban "globalise the intifada." To proscribe this phrase outright, without any consideration of the intent of the utterer, the context in which it is uttered, or any demonstrable consequences that flow from the utterance, will cross a major threshold in the erosion of civil liberties in Australia. Such a move will do nothing to enhance public safety in NSW. Its main practical effect will be to boost ongoing efforts by pro-Israel organisations to frame all forms of Palestine solidarity as inherently antisemitic and illegitimate—efforts that predate the Bondi attacks by decades.

Straightforward bans on words or phrases are relatively rare in this day and age. The only comparable recent case I can think of is Hong Kong, where in 2020 [the PRC government issued a ban on slogans](#) such as "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" (*Guangfu Xianggang, shidai geming*) as part of its National Security Law.<sup>2</sup> In Hong Kong today, any use of this slogan is deemed an offence, and [people have been sentenced to months in prison](#) simply for wearing t-shirts that sport it.<sup>3</sup> At the time of its introduction, public sentiment in Australia was overwhelmingly against the National Security Law, and the Federal Government continues to criticise the law's infringement on civil liberties. Yet here we are debating a move to impose very similar restrictions on freedom of speech.

[The NSW government's public justification](#) for its push to ban "globalise the intifada" (and possibly other slogans) is that it "is hate speech and encouraging of violence in our community."<sup>4</sup> Premier Chris [Minns evidently believes that](#) there is some causal link between this slogan and

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<sup>1</sup> David Brophy, "Universities and the Arts After Bondi: From Definitions to 'Ambient Antisemitism'," *Overland Literary Journal*, 9 January 2026. <https://overland.org.au/2026/01/universities-and-the-arts-after-bondi-from-definitions-to-ambient-antisemitism/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Government statement," 2 July 2020. <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202007/02/P2020070200869.htm>

<sup>3</sup> "A Hong Kong man is jailed 3 months for sedition for wearing a T-shirt with a protest slogan," *Associated Press*, 20 January 2024.

<sup>4</sup> "NSW Government to crack down further on hateful symbols and slogans." <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/nsw-government-to-crack-down-further-on-hateful-symbols-and-slogans#:~:text=Horrific%20recent%20events%20also%20show,vilify%20and%20intimidate%20our%20community.>

acts of anti-Jewish violence such as the atrocities at Bondi: “this phrase used in this context can lead to violence.”<sup>5</sup>

This raises an obvious question. If “globalise the intifada” is indeed hate speech that encourages violence against Jews, then there are already laws on the books covering this. In May 2024, [Australian university vice-chancellors wrote to Attorney-General Richard Dreyfus](#) requesting advice on “whether these phrases constitute hate speech or legitimate expression,” promising to act if they were given “authoritative, definitive and enforceable advice.”<sup>6</sup> Dreyfus declined to provide new advice, pointing to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act as the appropriate mechanism to pursue a complaint on this score. At the criminal level, Section 93Z of the *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)* makes it an offence to publicly threaten or incite violence because of (a) race or (b) religious affiliation (among other possible grounds).

Clearly, from the alarmist public discourse, we are being asked to believe something similar: that in calling to globalise the intifada, pro-Palestine demonstrators are inciting violence against Jews as a racial/religious group. Certainly, this is how Zionist organisations interpret the phrase. [As David Ossip from the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies puts it](#), “Globalising the Intifada means killing a Jew wherever you find one.”<sup>7</sup> Yet the government’s own actions call this interpretation into doubt. Indeed, the fact that Minns has called this inquiry might indicate that he *doesn’t* see “globalise the intifada” as anti-Jewish hate speech. Tellingly, he has sidestepped invitations to define the term *intifada* and is yet to explain how he sees chants at rallies feeding into Bondi-style violence. On what basis, then, is the government proposing to ban “globalise the intifada”? The situation is confusing.

Hate speech is demarcated in different ways around the world, from the highly permissive First Amendment environment of the US, to the more restrictive legislative frameworks of Europe and Australia. But all governments recognise that there is a line between hate speech and speech that merely discomforts and offends. This is the line that the NSW government now seems at risk of blurring. Six years ago, at a time when this distinction was more clearly acknowledged than it is today, Robert French AC recommended a [model code on free speech](#) that was subsequently adopted at Australian universities.<sup>8</sup> The code stipulates that “the duty to foster the wellbeing of staff and students ... does not extend to a duty to protect any person from feeling offended or shocked or insulted by the lawful speech of another.” Clearly, slogans like “globalise the intifada” offend and shock some people. As a strategic question, one might on that basis choose

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Basford Canales, “What does ‘globalise the intifada’ mean, and why does NSW want to ban the chant?” *The Guardian*, 23 December 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/dec/23/globalise-the-intifada-meaning-translation-palestinian-protest-chant-ban-nsw>.

<sup>6</sup> David Crowe, “University chiefs seek federal advice on ‘intifada’ calls,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May 2024. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/university-chiefs-seek-federal-advice-on-intifada-calls-20240509-p5igpy.html>; James Massola, *et al.*, “Sydney, Monash Unis Warn Students as Dreyfus Refuses Legal Advice.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May 2024. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/sydney-monash-unis-warn-students-as-dreyfus-refuses-legal-advice-20240509-p5isu7.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Josie Harvey, Miles Proust, “NSW premier calls for royal commission, pledges to ban ‘globalise the intifada’ chant,” *SBSNews*, 20 December 2025. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/chris-minns-bondi-attack-hate-speech-laws/c2q2u3v8v>.

<sup>8</sup> French Review Model Code Implementation Group, “A Model Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers,” (2019). <https://apo.org.au/node/264771>.

to avoid such slogans—opinions on this do differ among participants in the pro-Palestine movement. But that doesn't render them unlawful.

### **Slogans and their meaning**

Obviously, much of this debate turns on competing understandings of the term *intifada*. The crucial claim, as far as I can tell, is that this word can, for practical purposes, be reduced to certain specific forms of violence associated with historic intifadas in Palestine, most notably the suicide bombings of the Second Intifada (2000-2005). This would potentially narrow the meaning of *intifada* to something like “indiscriminate attacks on Jews,” with calls to globalise it thus arguably construable as endorsing, or even encouraging, such attacks against Jews worldwide.

It is not hard to see how much interpretive strain this all requires. It is simply arbitrary and untenable to take a term whose basic meaning is “uprising,” and is applied to various forms of political resistance across the Arabic-speaking world, and redefine it in this way. It also requires us to completely ignore what demonstrators say they have in mind when they chant this slogan.

Some commentators do acknowledge the semantic scope of the term, only to disregard it. [In the Sydney Morning Herald, David Crowe](#) introduces *intifada* as “the key term for the waves of suicide bombings and other attacks against Israelis in recent decades...” This is a strange starting point though. One might equally say that *intifada* is the “key term” for Palestinian non-violent resistance. In truth, both statements would be category errors. Intifada refers to periodic flare-ups of mass Palestinian resistance, within which different tactics have come to the fore at different times. It cannot be reduced to any of those tactics. Arabic, like English, has its own words for those. Yet for Crowe, the historic fact of Palestinian suicide bombings is enough for him to deem any use of *intifada* as a “call for violence.” “It is true that many interpret the term more broadly,” he acknowledges, “but the link to those attacks is indisputable.”<sup>9</sup>

Drawing such “links” is a nonsensical way to parse political terminology, one that might license all sorts of linguistic purging. For centuries, the word “revolution” has held strongly negative connotations for some people. It has conjured up images of political terror, assassinations, and the gulag. Looking at the history of revolutions, one might well argue that the word has a “link” to such phenomena. Should we therefore conclude that when demonstrators chant for “revolution”, they are encouraging a repetition of the worst violence carried out in the name of revolution? Would that justify a ban on the term? I would hope not.

Political language, particularly the language of resistance and rebellion, is always a site of contestation. I would not argue that it is enough to simply look up *intifada* in an Arabic dictionary to settle today's dispute surrounding the use of the term. Slogans have a life of their own and must be interpreted historically and contextually. But it is precisely such explorations of history that have been lacking from the strong claims being made for the violent and/or

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<sup>9</sup> David Crowe, “When Uni Students Endorse Terrorism, it's Time for Political Intervention,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May 2024. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/free-speech-or-threat-to-society-uni-tensions-demand-political-intervention-20240509-p5ir0w.html>.

antisemitic nature of the slogan “globalise the intifada.” Some consideration of how this language actually entered Western political discourse may therefore be helpful.

### **The origins of “globalise the intifada”**

We can acknowledge the difficulty of writing the history of something as slippery as a slogan: words chanted at a demonstration are by their nature ephemeral. But that is not to say that they leave no lasting trace. We have at our disposal rich databases of media reportage and commentary on protest movements stretching well back into the twentieth century, which allow some insight into the circumstances in which the Anglophone left first experimented with “globalise the intifada”. These show no use of the phrase prior to 2002. It was a particular political conjuncture at this time, I believe, that saw the first use of this language on the Western left.

The late 1990s saw a series of mass mobilisations targeting the World Trade Organisation and other gatherings of the world’s super-rich. The “battle in Seattle” was the catalyst for this summit-hopping movement, which came to Melbourne in the three-day S11 rally of 2000. Widely known as the “anti-globalisation” movement, such nomenclature did not sit comfortably with the left, which preferred to talk in terms of a “global justice” movement, and highlight grassroots alternatives to corporate-led globalisation: “globalise resistance” was a popular slogan.

Two events at the turn of the millennium complicated this picture for the left. First, in 2000, the Second Intifada erupted in Palestine. Then in 2001, the September 11 attacks on New York put the US and its allies on a war footing. In this context, activists in the US had to quickly pivot and build bridges between the existing global justice movement and the emerging pro-Palestine and anti-war campaigns. One important scene for these negotiations was a set of meetings and rallies held in Washington DC in late April 2002. On the eve of the main rally, a conference was held at American University calling itself “Global Intifada: Globalization, U.S. Militarism, and the Struggle for Justice in Palestine.”<sup>10</sup> At the rally the next day, which ended up being the biggest ever pro-Palestine mobilisation in American history, speakers on the platform called to “globalise the intifada.”<sup>11</sup>

Two months later, the G8 convened in the Canadian mountain resort of Kananaskis, a venue deliberately chosen to preclude direct demonstrations. Small rallies were held in the closest nearby city of Calgary. Among the slogans raised there was “G-8 says nada. We say global intifada.”<sup>12</sup> Then, at the end of August, a South African coalition of community organisations, trade unions, and social movements organised the Global People’s Protest March at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. As *Africa News* reports, “the multinational demonstrators sang, danced and ululated” a range of slogans: “End Poverty: Land, Food, Jobs,” “Water: a Human Right,” “Africa is not for \$ale, Our World is not for \$ale,” but

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<sup>10</sup> dana hearn, “Women’s Voices in the Global Shout: A20-Dc,” *Off Our Backs* 32, no. 7-8 (2002).

<sup>11</sup> Esther Kaplan, “‘Globalize the Intifada’,” in *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Tony Kushner, and Alisa Solomon (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>12</sup> Jim Rankin and Daniel Girard, “Fears of Protest Violence ‘Much Ado About Nothing’,” *Toronto Star*, 27 June 2002.

also “Liberate Palestine” and “Globalise the Intifada.”<sup>13</sup> At a side event dedicated to the campaign to free Palestinian political prisoner Marwan Barghouti, the Johannesburg City Hall was festooned with banners including “Globalise the Intifada against Imperialism.”<sup>14</sup> Note: against *imperialism*, not against Jews.

The slogan was, I would argue, a deliberate calque on “globalise resistance,” reflecting a conscious intervention to reorient the global justice movement towards a campaign that was both in solidarity with Palestine and against the looming US invasion of Iraq. While taking inspiration from Palestine, that is, its frame of reference was not confined to Palestine alone. It hardly needs saying that its emergence had nothing to do with any stance towards specific tactics of Palestinian resistance. To ask whether those who took up the slogan were thereby encouraging random acts of violence against Jewish people is absurd.

Jewish-American activist Esther Kaplan, who encountered the slogan for the first time at the April DC rally, certainly didn’t find the slogan intimidating, or interpret it as a call to violence. For her, “globalise the intifada” symbolised a shift in Palestine solidarity in the US, and she chose it as the title of an essay reflecting on this shift. To this point, Palestine had been a relatively niche cause in the West, often confined to the limited sphere of Palestinian-Jewish dialogue. The Second Intifada saw a widening in knowledge of, and support for, the Palestinian cause across American society, bringing with it bold new slogans. “Globalise the intifada” was one of these, expressing “Palestine’s new centrality in the left imagination.” But, already, its meaning was wider than this. At the Global Intifada conference at American University, “organizers aimed to highlight the Palestinian struggle for human rights and self-determination and to situate it within the wider struggle for justice on a global scale.” As one Arab-American activist at the gathering put it, “The rights of the Palestinian struggle is linked to other countries’ struggles dealing with voting rights, wars on drugs and terrorism, suffrage, and so on. This is our kind of globalization, the linking of such common efforts to end injustice.”<sup>15</sup>

On the English-speaking left, we can conclude, the slogan “globalise the intifada” arose out of, and in support of, widening support for Palestine. It recognised, and sought to build, links between Palestinian resistance and campaigns for justice elsewhere. And at its most capacious, it embodied a call for a global spirit of resistance against injustice and imperialism. Two decades on, I would argue that “globalise the intifada” still carries roughly the same meanings for participants in today’s pro-Palestine demonstrations as it did in the rallies against the Iraq War and corporate-led globalisation in the early 2000s.

### **The “global intifada” on the right**

Of course, talk of a “global intifada” is not simply a discourse of the left. It has a history on the right too, where it expresses right-wing, pro-Israel perceptions of international politics and the pro-Palestine movement. Naturally, such actors have wielded this language to undermine and

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<sup>13</sup> “Panafrika; Global People’s Protest March Ends Trouble-Free,” *Africa News*, 1 September 2002.

<sup>14</sup> “Palestinian Group Opposed to Summit Launches Campaign to Free Leader,” *Agence France Presse*, 30 August 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Bitzer, “American U. Conference Precluded Weekend of Protests,” *University Wire*, 22 April 2002.

delegitimise Palestinian resistance, just as Palestine allies have defended it as a vocabulary of liberation.

The first prominent invocation of a “global intifada” seems to date to 1990, when conservative commentator [Charles Krauthammer wrote an article](#) entitled “The New Crescent of Crisis: Global Intifada.”<sup>16</sup> Krauthammer was writing during the first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993), but his mind was on America’s post-Cold War positioning. The end of America’s rivalry with the Soviet Union brought with it a need for new paradigms for global politics. This putative “global intifada” was an interlinked front of Islamic militancy stretching across Eurasia, part of an emerging “clash of civilisations” (a perspective soon to be elaborated by political scientist Samuel Huntington). For the critic Edward Said, Krauthammer’s vision relied on a “monolithic, enraged, threatening, and conspiratorially spreading Islam.”<sup>17</sup> It was Islamophobic, and served Israel’s interests by interpreting Palestinian resistance as motivated not by oppression, but by global jihad. Such talk, as John Esposito put it, “distracts and detracts from the nature and real causes of discontent in the Palestinian intifada.”<sup>18</sup>

This paranoid view of a global intifada naturally provided a convenient framing for the West’s War on Terror. As America and its allies went into Iraq, Paul Sheehan imagined that dysfunctional Muslim societies were erupting in a “global intifada,” “part of a hot war driven by medievalism and resentment.” Australia was on the “outer edges” of this violent conflagration, with “paramilitary flying columns of Muslim men assembling in Punchbowl and Lakemba.”<sup>19</sup> Sheehan’s global intifada was racialised, serving to demonise Muslim migrants in the West, but for others the “global intifada” was widening. [Speaking at Columbia University in 2005](#), conservative culture warrior Phyllis Chesler expressed alarm that “the Intifada has gone global.”<sup>20</sup> Yet her global intifada was one in which Westerners were complicit, and her ire was directed at domestic enemies. “Western academics and intellectuals have made an alliance with Islamist totalitarian terrorists,” she railed. At this time, the negative connotations of *intifada* were still self-evident to many in the West: to position academics as part of an “academic Propaganda-Intifada” was enough to discredit them.

This line of thinking lives on today in public commentary on the Palestine solidarity movement. On the Australian right, it has almost become an article of faith that the local movement is coordinating with foreign actors: that “nothing that happened in Australia on or after 7 October 2023 was homegrown.”<sup>21</sup> This assumption has driven speculation that foreign paymasters were orchestrating the university encampments, and that universities themselves may be compromised by ties to Islamic governments. [According to the Australian Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism \(5A\)](#), a judicial inquiry into antisemitism was necessary to establish “the extent to

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The New Crescent of Crisis: Global Intifada,” *The Washington Post*, 15 February 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xxviii.

<sup>18</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 200.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Sheehan, “God v God in the New Global War,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Phyllis Chesler, “The Global Intifada” (March 6, 2005).

<https://openbooks.library.umass.edu/giftsofspeech/chapter/phyllis-chesler-the-global-intifada-2005/>.

<sup>21</sup> Megan Goldin, “The March to the Bondi Massacre Began At Sydney Town Hall,” *The Australian*, 10 January 2026. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/inquirer/the-march-to-the-bondi-massacre-began-at-sydney-town-hall/news-story/121bb65ddcb80a6d1ff4f713175a87c2>

which foreign and proscribed actors have been seeking to infiltrate and influence students and staff on campus.”<sup>22</sup> Among the recommendations in her *Plan to Combat Antisemitism*, Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism Jillian Segal demanded the right to direct authorities to “investigate sources of overseas funding entering public institutions, including universities, which might drive extreme ideologies.”<sup>23</sup> No doubt Segal and her allies will strive to make this line of inquiry a focus of the forthcoming Royal Commission.

Two points can be drawn from this. The first is that efforts to link the Palestine movement to actors like ISIS did not begin with Bondi. In that sense, the current fixation on the slogan “globalise the intifada” functions simply as a convenient vehicle for advancing an argument that has circulated for many years. But at the same time, this history of conservative anxieties and fulminations against a “global intifada” does help explain the particular spotlight that has been put on the slogan today. As many have pointed out, “globalise the intifada” is a relatively rare slogan on Australian demonstrations. Its centrality to the current debate certainly cannot be explained by its prominence at these events.

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In short, talk of a “global intifada” has been with us for a long time, as have the divergent meanings given to it by both the left and the right. It is not surprising, then, that as Palestine activists have sought to shift prevailing interpretations of the term, they have elicited a strong response from Israel’s defenders.

Ideally, such contestation would not be something a government would try to resolve. But that is exactly what the NSW government is proposing to do by proscribing “globalise the intifada” as hate speech. Given this, we are obliged to determine whether the claims being made by advocates of a ban stand up to scrutiny, and they do not. The fact that authorities are considering enshrining in law such an unjustifiably narrow and lurid interpretation of the Arabic term *intifada* is simply indicative of the deep suspicion and hostility towards Palestinians and their cause in Western societies. Arab-Australians will be entitled to see in it a case of anti-Arab bigotry. As I have shown, when pro-Palestine activists argue that they associate “globalise the intifada” with a call for global solidarity against injustice, they are on perfectly sound historical footing. The slogan essentially gives a pro-Palestine tinge to late-90s calls to “globalise resistance.” Pending credible evidence to the contrary, those who claim to be using it in this way deserve to be taken at their word.

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<sup>22</sup> Australian Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism, Submission to Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2). <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=61578b1c-3372-4296-9a25-cc1b5c82d191&subId=769111>

<sup>23</sup> Australian Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, “Special Envoy’s Plan to Combat Antisemitism” (2025). <https://www.aseca.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025-aseca-plan.pdf>