

**Submission
No 131**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

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My name is Sawsan Madina. I am writing as an Egyptian-born Australian citizen who has lived in Sydney for 56 years. I hold degrees in Economics and Education. In Australia, I worked as an Economics teacher, a Research Assistant at the Industries Assistance Commission, a Senior Course Director at The Institute of Administration at The University of NSW, Station Manager of SBS Radio, and Head of SBS Television. When I was appointed to the last position, in 1994, I was the first woman in Australia to head a television network.

I am writing to you because I am deeply concerned about the implications of this inquiry. I fear that the inquiry may rush to implement measures that will erode our democratic freedoms and that will result in the exact opposite of the stated objectives of those measures.

I believe that our existing laws already address incitements to violence and hatred. And I strongly oppose laws or measures that criminalise political expression or protest. The words and slogans into which you are inquiring neither promote hate nor incite violence against Jews. They simply call for resistance against Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and Israel's crimes against the Palestinians. I cannot see how criminalising those would make Australians safer or Australian society more cohesive. The message that you would give Arab and Moslem Australians, together with anti-Zionist Jewish Australians and the many others who are horrified by Israel's actions, is "Keep quiet and accept the Genocide". And where will this slippery slope end? When wearing a watermelon earring is banned? When the word "Palestine" is banned? It is already Orwellian that a word which means uprising may be criminalised. It begs the question, will its English equivalent also be criminalised?

I had never heard the expression "Globalise the Intifada" at the pro-Palestine rallies. When the NSW premier Chris Minns started to speak about it as a hateful expression that should be banned, after similar sentiments from US and UK leaders, I was perplexed. It felt like our leaders get their talking points directly from Washington and London. So much for our touted sovereignty.

At the moment, it is clear to a large number of Australians that there is a move to silence pro-Palestine speech and shut down pro-Palestine rallies. I have regularly attended those rallies and I can report that, despite the propaganda and lies surrounding them, they are peaceful events, held to highlight the plight of Palestinians and call on the Government to take action against Israel and fulfill its obligations under International Law. Australian Jews attend and speak at these rallies. These rallies have absolutely nothing to do with religion and everything to do with occupation. Arab Australians are horrified at Israel's slaughter of their kith and kin and anti-Zionist Jewish Australians are horrified at Israel's claim that it is doing this in their name. And both groups have been shocked and horrified by the Bondi Beach massacre. Antisemitism is not the same as criticising a government's policies. Criticising the Israeli government is not antisemitic, just as criticising Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses is not islamophobic. And rejecting antisemitism does not require silence on the Genocide in Gaza.

Beyond the issue of Palestine, I fear the implications of rushed laws to curb our rights to speak and protest, in all areas. It's a slippery slope to policing academic research, jailing climate activists, censoring artistic expression... and ultimately burning books. Importing the current US and UK draconian approaches to the rights of their citizens will not achieve greater security and social cohesion. The disastrous results are on full display in both countries.

I abhor racism in all its forms and believe that we all must work to stamp it out. I also believe that this is best done through education not repression. The latter generates fear and resentment. Any response that does not uphold our democratic rights, that conflates political expression with antisemitism, or targets one section of the community, is doomed to fail.

I urge you to implement real solutions to community safety and social cohesion problems, not quick fixes that erode our freedoms and exacerbate the problems they are meant to solve.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my views and thank you for taking the time to read my submission.