

INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission to the Inquiry on Antisemitism in New South Wales by Taveet SINANIAN

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a person of Jewish-Armenian descent, with an Armenian immigrant father whose family were refugees from the Armenian genocide, and a Jewish Dutch mother whose parents had survived the holocaust in the Netherlands.

I identify as both Armenian and Jewish, due to the respective cultures of my parents: Armenian cultural tradition considers itself to be passed down through the patrilineal line, and Jewish tradition considers itself to be passed down matrilineally.

I am immensely proud of my heritage, and believe it is an incredible privilege to be descended from two noble peoples who have survived despite tremendous hardship.

Unfortunately, as it has always been for children of immigrants in Australia, I have encountered prejudice my entire life. I have of course experienced antisemitism, anti-Armenian bigotry, and even misplaced Islamophobia or anti-Arab racism due to being mistaken for an Arab or Muslim.

Most of the antisemitism (as well as the other bigotry) I have experienced in my time has come from two very distinct sources, both of which are different to what is usually portrayed on popular media.

The first group which I have experienced antisemitism from has been from the far-right wing. This includes white nationalists, neo-nazis, conspiracy theorists, and others on the far right and alt-right.

Much of this antisemitism has come in the form of online abuse and vitriol, conspiracy theories, antisemitic accusations, holocaust denial, as well as threats of violence. Some of the antisemitism has been in the form of *dog-whistles*, which is to say coded language which is designed to disguise the true nature of the speech, such as describing someone as a “globalist”, a “cultural Marxist”, or mentions of “George Soros”, all of which are code used by far-right individuals and organisations to mean Jewish people. Given the current media climate, it is important that I note that this rhetoric is overwhelmingly perpetuated by people of European/Caucasian heritage, as opposed to those of Arab or Middle-Eastern heritage.

The second, and somewhat counterintuitive group from whom I have received antisemitic vitriol has been Zionist supporters of Israel.

Ever since I was young, my grandparents told me of the horrors they experienced during the holocaust, and how they saw Israel’s persecution of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza to be the same as their treatment by the Nazi government. They were fierce critics of Israel’s policies towards Palestinian people and made a point not to donate money towards the Jewish National Fund (JNF) whom they suspected of providing support for extremist settlers.

My family’s experiences suffering ethnic persecution and genocide have made me acutely aware of the suffering of Palestinian people, even before the Oct. 7 attack, and I have always been a stalwart supporter of Palestinian human rights.

Strangely, this principled stance passed down from my grandparents has resulted in some of the most insulting, dehumanising and antisemitic vitriol that my fellow pro-Palestine Jews and I have ever experienced. A close family friend of mine was told by a Zionist of South African Jewish ancestry that “it was a pity they [the Nazis] didn’t burn your family in the camps”, and my friends and I have been regularly referred to as a “kapo”, which is an exceedingly derogatory term utilised by Nazi Germany to refer to prisoner functionaries within concentration camps. Due to my Middle-Eastern appearance I am often also accused of being an “Arab/Muslim terrorist”, a “self-hating Jew”, a “fake Jew”, a “member of Hamas”, a “neo-nazi”, or a “traitor to my people”. I also receive other racist epithets such as “sand-n****r”, “towel-head”, “Paki”, “baby-killer”, “rapist” and “worshipper of the fake god Allah” from members of the Zionist community.

I am also frequently accused of “not having Jewish blood”, being a “secret Arab pretending to be a Jew” or of being part of “*erev rav*”, a term referring to foreigners who joined the Israelites leaving Egypt and were claimed to have introduced sin into the Israelite bloodline. These chilling examples of antisemitism have often come from within the Jewish community (frequently from within the right wing) and are hauntingly reminiscent of the remarks made towards people of mixed heritage in Nazi Germany. Additionally, these comments sometimes come from far-right Christian Zionists as well.

It is also important to note that pro-Palestine Jews have been publicly described by Mark Liebler, a prominent lawyer and Zionist activist as “repulsive and revolting human beings” and “antisemites”, remarks for which he is currently being referred to the Australian Human Rights Council for their offensive and discriminatory nature.

Having my Jewish heritage erased and/or weaponised against me, as well as having racial epithets thrown my way is unacceptable. Given the current climate, it is the right-wing making people such as me feel most unsafe, and this right wing includes many Zionist activists as well as white nationalists.

I will never be ashamed to be Jewish, however I refuse to allow antisemitism to be thrown my way by far-right activists, even if they themselves claim to be supporters of Israel and the Jewish community.

I trust my submission will be accepted in good faith by the Committee, and that it will be useful to the Committee hearings.

Yours sincerely,

Taveet Sinanian