

## **INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Mr Sam Altman

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## **Submission to the NSW Inquiry into Antisemitism**

I write this submission as the child of Polish-Jewish Holocaust survivors, each of whom was the sole survivor of their extended families. My father survived Buchenwald, my mother the Lodz Ghetto and then Auschwitz. After the war, they met and migrated to Australia as stateless aliens in 1951. I was born in Poland in 1947 and became a naturalized Australian citizen in 1963.

Growing up in Melbourne's large post-war Jewish community, I attended Yiddish and Hebrew after-school centres, though my family was not religious. My early years were marked by a staunch Zionist outlook, including fundraising for the Jewish National Fund. However, by my mid-teens, I began to embrace the Bundist, socialist, and anti-Zionist perspectives of my parents. This shift has now led me to critically question the legitimacy of the State of Israel from its inception in 1948, particularly its expansionist and settler-colonial actions against the Palestinian people. I see troubling parallels between these actions and Australia's own settler-colonial history, including the genocidal treatment of Aboriginal people.

In my youth, I experienced what I now think was anti-immigrant rather than antisemitic racism in inner-city Melbourne schools. However, the significant presence of Jewish/Northern European immigrants in these schools provided a sense of solidarity and resilience and meant we could hold our own.

I believe it is essential to critique Israel's policies, especially its ongoing actions against Palestinians, which I view as genocidal. The only moral, albeit unlikely, solution is the establishment of a unified, democratic, and non-sectarian state. This would require a genuine reckoning with the extreme inter-community strife, largely driven by Zionist actions since 1948.

In recent years, Australia has witnessed a troubling rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Palestinian racism. This has been exacerbated by misleading public commentary by public figures, particularly from pro-Israeli groups, which often seek to pit communities against one another. It is also worth noting that some recent antisemitic incidents were revealed to be orchestrated by criminal elements, a fact that should be considered in assessing the broader context.

I firmly believe that combating antisemitism must be part of a broader anti-racism movement, rooted in solidarity with all marginalized groups. Efforts to address antisemitism through criminalization or by exceptionalizing it above other forms of racism are counterproductive. Moreover, any move whereby criticism of Israel is equated with antisemitism is a cynical tactic aimed at silencing legitimate critique of Israel's policies, including its ethnic cleansing and settler-colonial practices.

Finally, I am concerned that some of the fear expressed by Jewish individuals and organizations in response to criticism of Israeli actions is deeply misguided and self-serving. This fear often stems from an unwillingness to acknowledge the role that Jewish people and institutions have played in actions amounting to ethnic cleansing and preliminary genocidal practices against Palestinians. Weaponizing antisemitism to suppress pro-Palestinian speech and activity undermines genuine efforts to combat racism in all its forms.

This submission is made in the hope that the Inquiry will adopt a nuanced approach to addressing antisemitism that recognizes its intersection with broader issues of racism and injustice. Further, that the Inquiry comes to an understanding that many Jews in Australia are horrified at what the State of Israel is doing to Palestinian people, falsely claiming it is in our name. It is only through solidarity and truth-telling we can hope to build more equitable and just societies here and in the Middle East.