

INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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I am a member of the Jewish community who grew up in Sydney and still spends a lot of time there for family and work, despite now living in Canberra.

My personal experience is that the small increase in active antisemitism in the community is being misrepresented by political players for political purposes, to justify violence, militarism, anti-immigrant sentiments, and Islamophobia. This political weaponisation of antisemitism and accusations of antisemitism is itself a danger to the Jewish community, because it divides the community, it promotes a politics of hate and violence which will inevitably place us in its sights, and it blinds us to the reality of that threat by misdirecting attention elsewhere.

The clear evidence accumulating from police reports is that the recent spate of antisemitic attacks that Jewish community leaders and media blamed on people expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people were in fact nothing of the sort.

The real danger to Jewish people, as always, is coming from the political right, as Elon Musk's Nazi salute legitimises the old fascist hatreds. There is a real danger from the rise of neo Nazi ideology here in Australia as elsewhere. But figures on the political right are misdirecting attention away from that and falsely accusing antiracist campaigners calling for an end to Israel's extreme violence against Palestinians of antisemitism.

It is my personal experience over decades that antisemitism is far less prevalent in these pro peace spaces than it is almost anywhere else I have found myself. This makes perfect sense. People seeking peace want peace everywhere, not just in specific places of conflict.

It is also my personal experience that the behaviour of the Murdoch media, and too often other media spaces including the ABC, wrongly equating critique of Israeli government and military action with antisemitism, causes real fear in the Jewish community. This fear, based on lies and misdirection, is intensely political and has deeply problematic consequences, including encouraging the horrific abuse and lateral violence that pro-peace members of the Jewish community like myself are subjected to.

The only way to combat antisemitism is to work towards a society where everyone is equally and justly entitled to safety, happiness and connection. Combatting antisemitism is no different from combatting other forms of hate. Indeed, there is clear evidence that singling out antisemitism as something inherently more problematic than other forms of racism and identity-based hate actually creates more dangers for us Jewish people.

Let us put aside the prejudices, the media beat-ups, the political bludgeons. Let's work together against racism in all its forms. Let's stop abusing claims of antisemitism for low political purposes, dividing the community and seeding more fear.

As my holocaust survivor Grandfather taught me, let us understand that none of us will ever be safe until all are safe.