

Australian National University expels two students for protesting against Gaza genocide

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Beatrice Tucker, a student organiser of the pro-Palestinian encampment at the Australian National University (ANU) in the country's capital Canberra, last week became the first student to be expelled publicly for opposing Israel's ongoing genocide against Gaza. Another student has also reportedly been barred from the university.

This marks a dangerous development in the coordinated efforts by the university administrations, corporate media and political establishment to vilify pro-Palestinian students and trample on the democratic rights of anyone who opposes the genocide and war.

Tucker must be defended. Students, youth and workers must demand that ANU immediately rescind the decision to expel the student.

A petition condemning Tucker's expulsion has garnered more than 500 signatures.

ANU's expulsion of Tucker is a precedent that will be used to intimidate and silence any anti-war or anti-government sentiment on the campuses. Already in the US, Germany, Canada and other countries, anti-genocide student protesters have been violently assaulted and arrested by police.

Tucker, according to a Students & Staff Against War ANU media release, was expelled due to comments made in an April radio interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in which the student said: " Hamas deserves our unconditional support ... Not because I agree with their strategy, complete disagreement with that."

Tucker's comments were a basic statement of defence of the right of an oppressed people to oppose their oppression. That is a principled position. It is also based on consolidated international law which has consistently affirmed the right of people subjected to illegal occupation, such as the Palestinians, to fight for their basic rights.

Despite this, and the fact that Tucker politically-differentiated from Hamas, there has been a foul campaign of vilification, spearheaded by political forces that support Israel's mass murder of women, children and civilians.

In a May 1 interview with News Corp's right-wing

publication the *Australian*, Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) co-CEO Alex Ryvchin said: "Anyone expressing support for a listed terrorist organisation should not only face immediate expulsion from the university, they should face the law."

Ryvchin told Murdoch-owned *Sky News* on May 20 that the peaceful student encampments had become "centres for extremism on our campuses." The ECAJ, despite receiving substantial federal government funding, functions as a virulent Zionist lobby group, defending every Israeli crime and witch-hunting opponents.

On June 6, it was reported that Tucker had been expelled by ANU, which prevented the student from accessing the campus or continuing studies.

It has also been reported by the ABC that, since Israel's onslaught began, ANU has engaged in 10 disciplinary proceedings against pro-Palestinian students. Four of these have been referred to police and two students have been expelled.

The crackdown on free speech on the campuses has been spearheaded by the Labor government under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, which has supported Israel's genocide of Palestinians since the Zionist state's onslaught began.

Albanese has repeatedly declared that the peaceful university encampments are antisemitic and dangerous. Effectively, he has been the chief instigator of attacks against the student protesters which have come in both the form of disciplinary actions against students and also physical attacks by right-wing Zionist thugs.

Last month, Albanese declared there was "no question" that antisemitism was "being expressed more openly" than at any other time in his life. He implicitly called for student encampments to be shut down, branding them "divisive" displays of "hatred" that "do not have a place" in society.

The encampments are being dismantled. Where previously there were more than a dozen across the country, now ANU is one of just a few left along with those in Sydney, Hobart and the regional city of Newcastle.

The winding up of the encampments, however, is

proceeding with the support of the organisers, whose main demands have been that the university administrations cut ties with Israel.

Back-door negotiations with the university managements have resulted in rotten deals which fundamentally alter nothing and will have no impact on Israel's continued onslaught.

Two weeks ago, the University of Melbourne encampment shut down based on a mutual agreement between the university administration and the encampment organisers.

It commits the university to disclose some research ties, with the caveat that management will not disclose anything it deems would go against "confidentiality" or "national security" considerations.

In Perth, capital city of Western Australia, the Curtin University Student Guild struck a deal with university management late last month for the end to an encampment, even though the Guild had not organised it.

Curtin University's encampment organisers then voted to end their encampment on May 23, citing "a decline in student numbers on campus" at the end of the semester, which resulted in their "power" being "diminished."

At the University of Queensland (UQ) in Brisbane, an estimated 1,500 students attended a Special General Meeting (SGM) last Wednesday convened to demand the university cut ties to Israel.

It is the first time at the university that an SGM was initiated not through the UQ Union, but through a petition of two percent of the student population. A total of 1,027 validated signatures were submitted to the student union. It is a significant display of the mass movement that is erupting among students and youth in opposition to the Gaza genocide and the complicity of Australian universities and the government.

Three motions were put to the meeting, calling for the university to cut ties to companies which supply weapons to the Israel Defense Forces, shut down the Boeing Centre on campus (Boeing is the fourth largest defence contractor in the world), and divestment from Israel.

All the motions were reportedly voted in favour, almost unanimously.

Days after the mass meeting was convened, UQ management released a "Statement of Commitment" reached with the student union and the organisers of the student encampment, UQ Muslim Students for Palestine.

In line with the University of Melbourne, UQ management's statement only commits the university to "provide greater transparency" around its research partnerships, subject to "confidentiality obligations, national security regulations and laws, and the health and safety of our researchers."

This was made conditional on the discontinuation of the encampment on campus.

That these deals are being struck by the encampment organisers is a warning to students that their middle-class leaderships are leading them down a blind alley. The perspective of plaintive appeals to university managements, pressuring them to cut their ties to weapons manufacturers, has been exposed as a fraud.

It is an open knowledge that all of Australia's universities are integrated into the military intelligence apparatus through lucrative deals with arms manufacturers. University management do not need to be forced to "disclose" because they actively brag about their ties to the major weapons companies. They are integral in the growth of militarism in the country, which is central to the US-orchestrated genocide in Gaza and broader US-led conflicts and preparations for war around the world.

Students must draw lessons from their experiences. The genocide cannot be fought through plaintive appeals to the university managements or to the Labor government. The perspective of protest politics, peddled by pseudo-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative and Solidarity has served to demobilise opposition and subordinate it to the very Labor government backing Israel's atrocities.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality fights for a turn to the working class, the revolutionary force in society. It must be mobilised to defend democratic rights, including those of students and protests, and to fight for an end to war. This poses the need for a socialist and internationalist perspective directed against the root cause of the eruption of imperialist militarism, capitalism itself.



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