

Australian Zionist lobby targets journalist Mary Kostakidis for opposing Israeli war crimes

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The Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) earlier this month launched action against journalist Mary Kostakidis, with a complaint to the Human Rights Commission accusing her of having breached the Racial Discrimination Act.

If the ZFA action were upheld, Kostakidis could be subject to substantial financial penalties, along with the inevitable reputational damage of an adverse finding under what are essentially hate crime laws.

As Kostakidis has sharply noted in response, the ZFA action is a politically-motivated attempt to silence her because she has condemned Israeli war crimes.

By targeting a high-profile figure such as Kostakidis, who is well-known, particularly for her past role as the lead news presenter of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), the Zionists are seeking to set a precedent for a broader suppression of opposition to the genocide. Even if the complaint is unsuccessful, it serves the purpose of a deterrent, with outspoken individuals aware they face the prospect of costly and time-consuming litigation.

At the same time, Kostakidis has no doubt raised the ire of establishment figures, not only because of her opposition to the genocide but other critical positions. She was among the most active and prominent advocates for the freedom of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange in Australia and has also condemned US-led wars and military aggression, including against China and Russia.

Whether directly connected or not, the ZFA action was launched under conditions where the state and federal Labor governments have taken further steps in the direction of criminalising opposition to the massive war crimes in Gaza and Australia's complicity.

The substance of the complaint, as reported by the ZFA itself, is both baseless and provocative. The ZFA has supported the entire Israeli leveling operation in Gaza, which, according to estimates published in the *Lancet* medical journal this month, has potentially killed almost 200,000 Palestinians in Gaza, around 8 percent of the

population.

The ZFA has cheered on the bombardment and denounced all opposition, even as Israeli leaders have explicitly declared their genocidal intent, describing the population of Gaza as “animals” to be ethnically-cleansed from the entire strip.

And now, because Kostakidis has denounced this barbarism, reminiscent of the worst crimes of the 20th century, the ZFA is accusing her of advocating the “ethnic cleansing” of Jewish Israelis!

Of course, Kostakidis has done no such thing. The ZFA has latched onto the fact that she retweeted a speech delivered last year by Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon.

In his address, Nasrallah had stated “Here you don't have a future, from the river to the sea the land of Palestine is for the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian people only.” Kostakidis commented above, “The Israeli govt getting some of its own medicine. Israel has started something it can't finish with this genocide.”

That is hardly a political endorsement of Hezbollah, Nasrallah or their perspective of a failed pan-Arab bourgeois nationalism. Kostakidis' comment, that Israel's perpetration of a genocide will have consequences for the Zionist regime, is an indisputable statement of fact. How could the mass murder of tens or even hundreds of thousands of civilians not further disfigure and criminalise the state perpetrating it?

Kostakidis has also pointed out that a basic journalistic responsibility is to report the statements and perspectives advanced by opposing sides. If retweeting the statement of a controversial political figure is forbidden, so is accurate news reportage.

The journalist has noted that the phrase, “From the river to the sea,” with which Zionists take such umbrage, also appears in the charter of the Likud Party of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It is the Israeli regime that has invested that phrase with a content of ethnic supremacy

and is seeking to kill or displace Palestinians from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

In an X/Twitter response to the ZFA's announcement of its complaint, Kostakidis branded it as an attempt "to frame me as a rape and Holocaust denier."

She noted that the filing of the complaint shortly followed the publication of a feature article in *Nine Entertainment's Age* newspaper by its chief reporter Chip Le Grand. The article, published July 7, branded Kostakidis and other critical voices as purveyors of "denial and disinformation," presenting these activities as an attack on survivors of the October 7 Hamas military operation.

The timing of the article was odd, given that it was largely an unoriginal retelling of Israeli state claims, trumpeted by the western media in late 2023 and early this year, most of which have been entirely debunked. Exactly a week after Le Grand's article was published, the ZFA announced its complaint against Kostakidis, taking up the same talking points he had raised.

Kostakidis revealed that prior to the ZFA announcing its action against her, Le Grand had informed her of the impending complaint and asked for her response. He was, she commented, "very well informed about what the Zionist lobby gets up to on a Sunday," and more bluntly, "He helped roll out the carpet for the Zionist lobby with his setting of the scene in last week's story."

Le Grand had specifically condemned Kostakidis for having raised the prospect of Israeli foreknowledge of the October 7 action and the possibility that the Netanyahu regime had allowed it to occur as the pretext for an assault on Gaza. On that point, Kostakidis was fully vindicated more than half a year before Le Grand went to print.

Last December, the *New York Times*, hardly a mouthpiece of Hamas, confirmed that Israel had held the Palestinian groups' detailed plan of attack for more than a year before October 7. The Zionist regime had also received specific intelligence of the impending attack in the days before, and inexplicably left the border almost entirely unprotected.

Le Grand denounced Kostakidis for raising the question of how many Israelis were killed by the Israel Defence Forces on October 7. It had been known for months prior to Le Grand's story that Israel had activated the "Hannibal Directive" on that day, under which "the kidnapping [of Israelis] must be stopped by all means, even at the price of striking and harming our own forces."

The very day Le Grand's article was published, *Haaretz*, among the most prominent Israeli papers, released a featured investigation finding that the use of the directive had resulted in "crazy hysteria" and "chaos," with Israeli forces likely killing numbers of Israeli civilians.

Finally, Le Grand took Kostakidis for task for her

"skepticism" towards the Zionist claim that Hamas conducted mass sexual violence on October 7. Israel has not presented a single survivor of this purported campaign of rape or any physical or video evidence. Its claims have instead been justified with hysterical declarations that even requesting such evidence is proof of antisemitism.

Le Grand, in other words, while denouncing "misinformation," purveyed Israeli state lies and clearly sought to do a job on Kostakidis. That typifies the complicity of the corporate press in the genocide and the victimisation of those opposing it.

The operation against Kostakidis occurred as the Labor governments carried out similar measures. Last week, Hash Tayeh, a leader of the pro-Palestinian protests in Melbourne, was arrested by Victorian Police, accused of racial vilification for denouncing Zionism as a terrorist ideology. Tayeh has made crystal clear his opposition to antisemitism and his rejection of the bogus line equating the Israeli state with Jewish people.

Earlier this month, the federal Labor administration appointed businesswoman Jillian Segal as its new "Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism." Segal is a pro-Israeli lobbyist who has explicitly defended Israel's bombing of hospitals, demanded repressive action against pro-Palestinian student protesters and declared that she will combat opposition to Zionism.

The ZFA, like Segal, is seeking to prosecute opposition to a genocide, under conditions where it finds itself on the wrong side of international law on every substantive issue related to Palestine. The ZFA has denounced adverse findings against Israel over recent months by both the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

The attack on Kostakidis should be opposed by all defenders of democratic rights. Together with the broader crackdown on civil liberties, it again confirms the need for a political struggle against the genocide, all those governments facilitating it, including Labor in Australia, and the capitalist system that is hurtling towards war and authoritarianism.



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