

Australia: Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee members speak out in defence of Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah

Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee
2 February 2025

Members of the Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee (RFC) in Sydney have issued statements in defence of Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, one of their colleagues who is facing a mounting Zionist-led media and government witch hunt because of her support for the democratic and human rights of the Palestinians.

We urge educators and students at Macquarie and throughout the education sector to also make statements denouncing and opposing the demonisation and victimisation of Abdel-Fattah. She has been falsely accused of antisemitism, along with many others in Australia and internationally, for opposing the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Last week, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's Labor Party government openly threw its full weight behind the attack, which includes demands for her sacking by university management.

Education Minister Jason Clare wrote to the Australian Research Council (ARC) last Friday asking it to investigate "as a matter of urgency" Abdel-Fattah's current ARC \$870,000 research grant, based on phony allegations that she breached the grant rules.

This marks a further ramping up of the role of the Labor government, like its counterparts in Washington and other imperialist capitals internationally, in backing the ongoing Israeli mass murder in the Middle East and seeking to witch hunt, outlaw and persecute participants in the mass global opposition to it.

Labor's attack echoes those of the fascist Trump administration in the US, which is demanding the suppression of all political opposition on university campuses and the deportation of students who have taken part in anti-genocide demonstrations.

The Macquarie University RFC issued a statement on January 21 calling on academics, university workers and

students at Macquarie and more broadly to come to the defence of Abdel-Fattah.

The statement also called for the defence of other critics of Israel being persecuted by governments, the corporate media and Zionist organisations. These include journalist Mary Kostakidis, University of Sydney academics, John Keane and Nick Riemer, as well as sociology professor Sujatha Fernandes and the same university's sacked academic Tim Anderson.

The Labor government's move against Abdel-Fattah has demonstrated the need for this call to be taken up urgently.

Carolyn Kennett, a maths educator at Macquarie University and RFC member, said: "I am writing in support of Randa Abdel-Fattah who has been subject to a prolonged campaign which includes false allegations of antisemitism and hate speech. Randa Abdel-Fattah has consistently made clear her position on Zionism.

"Zionism is a reactionary nationalist political ideology, which has a history of decades of oppression against the Palestinians. The Zionist regime in Israel has been conducting a war of annihilation in Gaza and the West Bank.

"While imperialist governments and the Zionist regime in Israel attempt to claim that being a Zionist and being a Jew are one and the same, it is clearly not true. As the Jewish Council of Australia state on their website: 'We reject the assertion that Jews and the State of Israel are one and the same, or that all Jewish people support, without criticism, the actions of the Israeli government and military.'

"Abdel-Fattah has spoken out against the Israeli government's oppression of the Palestinian people for years. She has questioned mainstream media reports that republished lies made by the Zionist regime regarding

atrocities that have occurred. These are perfectly legitimate positions to take. Many of the so-called ‘atrocities’ on October 7 have been found to be either completely false or greatly exaggerated.

“The articles in the Murdoch press, in particular, have been slanderous. The few times that Abdel-Fattah has been quoted, the quotes have been taken out of context, misinterpreted and edited to suit a particular story. The articles have also given voice to the views of pro-Zionist lobby groups and politicians. Calls by these people to have her removed from her position and to have her research funding withdrawn are appalling.

“The witch hunt has gone on long enough. While increasing pressure is coming to bear on universities from powerful lobby groups and imperialist governments who continue to support the Israeli genocide in Gaza, free speech is a fundamental democratic right.

“War is on the agenda, not just in the Middle East and Ukraine, but on a much broader scale. Opponents of war have a duty to speak out. The threat being made against Abdel-Fattah is one that will be increasingly used by governments to silence opposition from workers.”

Chris Gordon, another maths educator, wrote: “I am an academic at Macquarie University, and a member of the Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee.

“For speaking out against genocide in Gaza, Macquarie University academic Randa Abdel-Fattah has been attacked by the right-wing media, led by the *Australian*. Macquarie University has launched an investigation into Abdel-Fattah, who holds a prestigious grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC). Federal Education Minister Jason Clare has called for an investigation into the grant, making trumped-up accusations that the conditions of the grant have been violated.

“These latest allegations have no basis except to silence and demonise any criticism of Israel.

“What is Abdel-Fattah’s ‘crime’? She tweeted on X: ‘May 2025 be the end of Israel. May it be the end of the US-Israeli imperial scourge on humanity. May we see the abolishment of the death cult of Zionism and the end of US empire and finally a world where the slaughter, annihilation and torture of Palestinians is no longer daily routine.’

“The strong and direct language of Abdel-Fattah is an indictment of the atrocities that have been committed by Israel, supported principally by the United States but also by the Australian government.

“Accusing Israel of genocide is not antisemitic. It is anti-Zionist. Moreover, the assertion that the Zionist regime

conducts the ‘slaughter, annihilation and torture of Palestinians’ is correct.

“The Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University recently said in an email that it is necessary to ‘condemn’ the ‘shocking forms of overt antisemitism.’ But Macquarie University has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, which conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

“I fully support the right of Abdel-Fattah to speak out against the crimes of Israel and condemn the attacks against her. I urge students and staff to come to her defence.”

The main campus trade union, the National Tertiary Education Union, has not issued a single statement in defence of anti-genocide academics. That demonstrates the need for educators and students to form rank-and-file committees, independent of the union apparatuses, to discuss and organise.

As the Macquarie University RFC statement concluded: “The defence of basic democratic rights, including academic freedom, is essential. As universities become increasingly enmeshed into serving the research needs of both Australian and US militarism via the Labor government’s Universities Accord, the rights of academics to speak out against imperialist war is more important than ever.”

To take forward this fight and defend Abdel-Fattah and all other educators facing attack, please send statements of support to the Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the rank-and-file educators’ network.

Contact the CFPE:

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