

Failed media-Zionist provocation at Sydney restaurant as witch-hunt of Bankstown nurses continues

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A protracted campaign to falsely brand all opposition to the Israeli genocide as antisemitism is intensifying, with politicians and the media whipping up an atmosphere of hysteria. The manufactured character of the “national crisis” was sharply demonstrated by an episode at a restaurant in the Sydney suburb of Newtown on Tuesday.

A man who has previously been featured in the media as a virulent supporter of Israel walked into Cairo Takeaway. After the pro-Israeli had ordered a tea, lingered for a couple of minutes and then left the restaurant, Danielle Gusmaroli, a senior journalist at the *Daily Telegraph* walked in with a video editor and began asking the staff questions.

The details are contested, but based on the context, what is publicly known and through leaked *Daily Telegraph* files, it is clear that this was an attempt to allege some sort of antisemitism on the part of the restaurant and its employees. The staff, however, did not take the bait and the *Telegraph* has not published any story about the restaurant.

There is no indication as to why a major newspaper targeted this particular restaurant, other than that its Egyptian-born owner is known to be an opponent of the Gaza genocide and the venue was preparing to host a fundraiser in support of the Palestinians.

The restaurant owner reported the *Telegraph's* attempt to manufacture an incident on X on Tuesday evening. Towards the end of the week, it was picked up and covered by several prominent publications.

But infinitely more attention has been given to another story, which broke the following day, on Wednesday morning. Israeli “social media influencer” Max Veifer provided Australian media outlets with video excerpts of an interaction he had the previous evening on a webcam chatting site with two nurses who work at Sydney’s Bankstown Hospital.

The edited excerpts showed a heated exchange about Israel’s mass murder in Gaza. At the end of the exchange, the nurses replied to Veifer that they would refuse to treat Israeli patients and would instead kill them. Those were politically backward and reactionary comments, but everyone with any familiarity with the internet knows that overblown statements on such a

chatting site are rarely taken literally.

No matter. Within hours of its publication, the video had been commented on by virtually every leading politician in the country, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The nurses were condemned as “hateful” and as “antisemites,” although they had not said anything about Jewish people.

The campaign against the nurses has unfolded with extraordinary rapidity. On Wednesday, they were stood down, and by the end of Thursday, the relevant regulatory authorities had made arrangements to prohibit the two from ever working in any area of the healthcare system again.

The nurses are being investigated by a special antisemitism police taskforce, raising the prospect of “hate crime” charges which could carry a prison sentence. On Friday, one of their homes was raided. The day before, that nurse had been admitted to hospital over mental health concerns.

Everything is being done to ruin the lives of two young healthcare workers over stupid comments they made in a brief encounter online. The speed of their dismissal and the intervention of politicians is a denial of due process and natural justice. Still, virtually no voices in the media, including those of legal experts, have raised that basic issue of democratic rights.

This is all the more striking, given that questions about Veifer and the exchange are increasingly emerging. The video he provided to the media was heavily edited, with several jump cuts. Veifer declared his willingness to provide an unedited version to the police, but for several days did not, claiming to have been given an incorrect email address. This morning, Sky News claimed that Veifer had sent the unedited footage to the police on Friday night.

The Israeli posted a longer version of his interaction with the nurses on social media, which he claims is complete and unedited. Whether that is the case remains to be seen, but the longer video underscores that Veifer baited the nurses with his own offensive comments, which were calculated to provoke a response.

Veifer boasted of his service in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). “I served in the IDF, what’s the problem with that?” he asked, to which one of the nurses responded, “Because they kill

innocent people.” Veifer effectively defended the mass slaughter of Palestinians, declaring, “In a war, people die.”

Towards what appears to be the end of the exchange, Veifer sought to shift the discussion from Israel to the attitude of the nurses to Jewish people. Perhaps sensing that they were being set up, but too late, the nurses appear to have ended the chat.

The fact that Veifer is a Zionist provocateur and a defender of Israeli war crimes is no revelation, but it has been buried by the political and media establishment. One only needs to look at his previous videos to see how cynical and disingenuous is the depiction of him as a young man offended and concerned by the stupid remarks of the nurses. His triumphant “Mission Accomplished” declarations to media outlets attest to the premeditated nature of his interaction with the nurses.

The WSWS has previously pointed to videos in which Veifer defended the killing of Palestinian children. In another, he encouraged a Middle Eastern man to get as close to his webcam as possible. Veifer then pulled out a pager, said “beep beep” and played footage of an explosion on his screen. That was a favourable reference to Israel’s terrorist attack in Beirut last September, in which its remote detonation of tampered pagers killed at least 12 people and maimed thousands, including many young children.

The two nurses have been subjected to something approaching a reputational, professional and legal lynching over hypothetical remarks made in the heat of the moment that they have repeatedly apologised for. On X and other social media platforms the most right-wing and racist forces are demanding the deportation of the nurses, both of whom are Australian citizens, and in some cases, literally baying for their blood.

Meanwhile, Veifer, who served in the IDF, a military synonymous with war crimes and oppression, and who openly supports state terrorism, is presented as the wounded party and as having done some great public service by setting the health workers up.

The inversion, in this instance, is part of a broader phenomenon. The mass slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza is supported by the Labor government, which has also refused to condemn Trump’s Hitlerian declarations that he will ethnically cleanse its more than 2 million inhabitants and seize the Strip. The scale of these staggering crimes is covered up by the media, which instead presents Israel’s most ardent supporters in a pro-Zionist lobby as the victims of rampant antisemitism.

The targets of the official campaign against “antisemitism” include such individuals as Macquarie University academic Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah and Sarah Schwartz, a young Jewish woman who is the executive director of the Jewish Council of Australia. There is no credible claim that individuals such as Abdel-Fattah and Schwartz are anti-Jewish bigots, but simply that they have opposed the illegal actions of the Israeli government.

The media and politicians claim a wave of antisemitism is

infecting virtually every sphere of society. But the incident at the Newtown restaurant suggests otherwise.

Daily Telegraph files leaked to *Crikey* indicate that the sting-style operation was in the works for a week. Initially, the pro-Israeli man was to roam around random suburbs, wearing clothes with the Star of David.

While “secretly” filming with video glasses, he was to “walk down main streets in Newtown, Blacktown, Bankstown, Arncliffe (might not do arncliffe it the worst perhaps) and film people [sic] reactions to this Jewish man in their neighbourhood.” Those involved in this bizarre plan at the *Telegraph* appear to have named it “UNDERCOVERJEW.” Even by the standards of fishing operations, this was rather desperate stuff.

Ultimately, Cairo Takeaway was selected. The details of what occurred are disputed. The pro-Israeli man has “lawyered up,” with a prominent legal firm sending threats to the cafe owner and media outlets, including demands that he not be described as a provocateur. *Telegraph* editor Ben English has stated that the story was part of a broader project, which included visiting multiple venues across Sydney to report on “the rise of antisemitism and... how it is affecting the daily lives of Jewish people in Sydney.”

People will draw their own conclusions. One may be that the *Telegraph* sought to instigate a response from the restaurant staff that could have been depicted as antisemitic, but did not get what they were looking for. If that is the case, such activities are not journalism, but provocation. They are not an attempt to “combat antisemitism,” but to stoke racial tensions and to witch hunt ordinary people.

The main lesson of this and the increasingly tragic witch hunt of the Bankstown nurses is that in opposing the genocide, the state and the corporate media, anger, opposition and emotion are not enough. Workers confront powerful foes and to respond and develop the struggle against the mass slaughter of the Palestinians and to defend their social and democratic rights, they need a far higher level of political consciousness than currently exists.

That begins with an understanding that the US-Israeli war crimes are part of an eruption of imperialist militarism globally, threatening a new world war. These are crimes, not only of Israel, but of capitalism, a system that is in terminal crisis and is vomiting up all the worst phenomena of the 1930s. The alternative is the fight to build a socialist movement internationally aimed at ending the rule of the oligarchy, dismantling the capitalist state that defends it and bringing the working class to power.



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