

Australia: Teachers oppose Zionist and government witch hunt against Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah

Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee
16 February 2025

Teachers at a Melbourne high school passed a resolution last Thursday opposing the targeted victimisation by Zionist groups and the Albanese Labor government of Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, a well-known pro-Palestinian academic at Sydney's Macquarie University.

A member of the Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the educators' rank-and-file network, moved the resolution in support of the statement issued by the Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee on January 21 calling on academics, university workers and students at Macquarie and more broadly to come to the defence of Abdel-Fattah.

Like many other opponents in Australia and internationally of the intensifying and ever-more blatant US-backed Israeli mass killings and ethnic cleansing in Palestine, Abdel-Fattah has been falsely accused of antisemitism because she has spoken out against the genocide and the Zionist state of Israel itself.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's Labor Party government has openly joined the attack, alongside the Liberal-National Coalition. This includes demands by Labor MP Josh Burns, the chair of a government-initiated parliamentary committee inquiry into "Antisemitism at Australian universities," for Abdel-Fattah's "removal" by the Macquarie University management.

Earlier, Education Minister Jason Clare wrote to the Australian Research Council (ARC) asking it to urgently investigate Abdel-Fattah's current ARC \$870,000 research grant, based on phony allegations that she breached the grant rules.

The resolution adopted by the Footscray High School

sub-branch of the Australian Education Union (AEU) "opposes the victimisation and witch hunt of anti-genocide activist, Randa Abdel-Fattah—an academic in sociology at Macquarie (MQ) university. Abdel-Fattah holds a four-year Future Fellowship (research grant) from the Australian Research Council and is an award-winning author of books for children and young adults."

The resolution states: "The latest attacks on Abdel-Fattah are aimed at rescinding her research grant and sacking her from MQ university. The harassment is being led by the Murdoch media, Zionist lobby groups and is fully endorsed by the Albanese government. Abdel-Fattah, like others who oppose the genocide in Gaza, is being bullied and slandered as being antisemitic for speaking out in defence of the Palestinian people.

"The attack on Abdel-Fattah is not confined to one academic but aimed at silencing any opposition to the US-Israeli mass killings now to be intensified under the Trump administration's criminal plan to ethnically cleanse the entire area.

"We call on educators and workers at universities and schools to pass resolutions of support, defending Abdel-Fattah, the right to free speech, democratic rights, including academic freedom—all of which is under sustained attack."

We urge teachers, university staff and all workers and students to endorse that resolution and campaign for similar resolutions throughout the entire education sector and more widely in the working class.

To discuss how to take forward this campaign, the Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee is holding a meeting at Macquarie University this

Thursday February 20 at 1pm AEDT in Room 110, 11 Wally's Walk. All are welcome to participate in this meeting, which can also be joined online via Zoom.

Click here to register for the meeting. To send statements of support, email the committee at macquarierfc@gmail.com, or the Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the rank-and-file educators' network, at cfpe.aus@gmail.com.

A postgraduate student at Macquarie University explained to a campaign team last week why he supports the defence campaign.

"To me it's part of a pattern which is happening across a number of tertiary institutions in Australia," he said. "Randa seems to be the lightning rod for these organisations to attack being a Palestinian woman and a very loudly outspoken and fierce researcher. It's unsurprising that they have decided to attack her.

"It represents a serious threat to those like her and myself who work in the space of Palestine in our research because it presents the possibility that we'll no longer be able to do this kind of research and to be able to communicate this research to our students in which we are critical of the ideology of Zionism and the state of Israel.

"So it's a serious threat to academic freedom but also our ability to teach and research, so I think it is imperative that we all collectively work to fight against this because the threat it poses is significant."

Asked about the role of the Labor government, which has joined the witch hunt against Abdel-Fattah, while defending the Israeli mass killings in Gaza and cooperating with the fascistic Trump administration as part of the US military alliance, he said:

"It's certainly deliberate and it's targeted and it's by no means a mistake. It is a deliberate action that is represented by the attack on Randa. It does represent a strong collaboration between the Australian government, the United States, the pro-Israel lobbies and Israeli interests in this country."

On the response of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), he commented: "I think the NTEU, from what I understand, is taking a bit of a hands-off approach. I'm not privy to the reasoning behind their strategy but my hope is that they would have been more vocal and more rigorous in their support because it might be Randa today but it might be any one of us

tomorrow. I would hope that if it was me, I would have the backing of the union both vocally and rigorously."

A Macquarie University professional staff member sent the following comments:

"I am disappointed but not surprised by the treatment of Dr Abdel-Fattah. It seems that there's a concerted effort by those in power to shut down any criticism of Israel's ongoing persecution of Palestinians.

"We are asked to feel outrage at the poor state of health of Israeli hostages (who along with the Palestinian people of Gaza have been deprived of food and medicine for more than a year) but cannot comment on the treatment and condition of Palestinian prisoners held in appalling conditions and without charge in Israeli jails.

"It's simply absurd. I call on Labor and the Coalition to stop their knee-jerk reactions to criticisms of Israel and to support those brave enough, like Dr Abdel-Fattah, to call out the crimes of the Israeli state. Calling out injustice is not antisemitism—it's just stating the facts."

Contact the CFPE:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

Twitter: CFPE_Australia

Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee meeting: Defend Randa Abdel-Fattah from Zionist witch hunt

Date: Thursday February 20, 2025

Time: 1 pm (AEDT)

Location: Room 110, 11 Wally's Walk, Macquarie University

Click here to register



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