

Concerns letter to Australian Jewish News

Email: ajn@jewishnews.net.au

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Dear AJN

I have just seen your article 'Lecturer defends Colleague', which contains a numbers of false statements about me. Without prejudice to my legal rights I ask that you publish this letter, to set the record straight.

Your article was correct in saying that I supported a colleague who wore a badge from Yemen and that I oppose the apartheid state of Israel. The rest of your article has many falsehoods.

1. I do not did not support the expression 'Death to Israel'; I simply refused to censor a photograph of several people in which the Yemeni badge appeared on the jacket of one person, in the background and virtually illegible.
2. For the record I do not support any of the slogans in that badge, including 'Death to America' and 'Victory to Islam'. Nor do I support political censorship.
3. The badge in question was not from a 'Houthi terrorist group', but from the Ansarallah group, which now forms part of the effective government of Yemen.
4. I am not a 'self-described Stalinist' and have never said anything remotely like that.
5. Contrary to ECAJ President Anton Bloch's false claim, I have not said or written anything significant about (for or against) North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. I have visited North Korea and have reported on some aspects of its educational, social and cultural life.
6. Contrary to the article, I am not a 'staunch Bashar al Assad supporter'. I am a writer and academic who supports the right of the Syrian people to determine their own future, without attacks and interference from the USA, NATO, the Saudis and Israel.
7. Contrary to the claims of Dvir Abramovich, I do not express 'irrational malice' towards Israel. Rather I oppose all apartheid states. I agree with key elements of the report prepared for the UN by Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley ('Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid', 2017), that is:
"The prohibition of apartheid, which, as a crime against humanity, can admit no exceptions, flows from the [Race Discrimination] Convention ... the situation in Israel-Palestine constitutes an unmet obligation of the organized international community to resolve a conflict partially generated by its own actions ... the policies, practices and measures applied by Israel to enforce a system of racial discrimination threaten regional peace and security ... [and there is] evidence for suspecting that a system of apartheid has been imposed on the Palestinian people."
That, in essence, is why I argue that the racial state of Israel must be dismantled.

8. It is not 'anti-semitic' (I presume by this AJN means 'anti-Jewish', ignoring all other semitic peoples) to oppose a racist state. That is just absurd and shows great ignorance of what constitutes racism.

Yours sincerely

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THE Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) has welcomed an investigation by the University of Sydney (USYD) into academic Tim Anderson's support for a colleague who wore a Yemeni badge that said "Death to Israel" and "Curse on the Jews".

After PhD candidate and former tutor Jay Tharappel came under fire for wearing the badge, which features the slogan of the Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist group, Anderson took to social media, saying Tharappel was "under attack from zionists [sic] for wearing a Yemeni (Ansarallah) badge because it says 'Death to Israel'".

The staunch Bashar al-Assad supporter later tweeted that a Sydney Morning Herald story on the controversy was "a smear piece".

A USYD spokesperson confirmed to *The AJN* Anderson was being investigated over the incident.

Anderson, who has travelled to Syria and met personally with Assad, last year called the sarin gas attack in Syria's Idlib province a "hoax" and has called the Syrian civil war a United States "fiction".

The self-described Stalinist also regularly accuses Israel of genocide, calls it an "apartheid state" and advocates its dismantling.

He has also pushed the bizarre idea that South Korea is occupied by the US and is not a democracy. He and Tharappel recently visited North Korea together.

ECAJ president Anton Block said Anderson's "repugnant support" for Syria's Assad and Kim Jong-un of North Korea, and his "hateful, eliminationist attitudes towards Israel, are of no consequence of themselves".

"What is concerning is that students and members of the general public might be misled into believing that his views should be taken seriously simply because he holds an academic position at a leading university," he said.

"Propaganda masquerading as scholarship has no place in any university and we can only welcome the investigation into the incident that the university is currently undertaking."

Anti-Defamation Commission chairman Dvir Abramovich called the incident "profoundly troubling, though not surprising given the irrational malice and unchecked hostility preciously shown by Dr Anderson towards Israel".

"Defending the wearing of a 'Death to Israel' badge is reprehensible and goes way beyond legitimate political expression," he said.

"While everyone has a right to voice their opinion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, supporting the destruction of the Jewish State is morally indefensible, anti-Semitic and should be condemned by Sydney University immediately."

GARETH NARUNSKY