

Australia: Mainstream media's Israel bias comes under pressure

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More than two months since Israel began its genocidal war on the Palestinian people, Australian mainstream media continues its unwavering support for Israel.

Although its bias towards Israel is unsurprising, given its role in upholding the [interests of the capitalist class](#), it is nevertheless sickening to see the apologisms for mass murder.

Meanwhile, reporters who do attempt to provide [truth and full context](#) are being censored.

However, cracks are showing in the propaganda machine: People are seeing through the lies and making links between the settler-colonialism of Israel and the genocidal violence of settler colonialism here.

The managements of the ABC, *The Guardian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, *The Age*, *The Saturday Paper* and *The Monthly* (Schwartz Media) are being [protested](#) by their own staff, as well as readers who are demanding accurate reporting.

Yet, their content is increasingly becoming absurd and Orwellian.

The *SMH* and *The Age* published a hit piece by conservative commentator [ParnellPalmeMcGuinness](#) on December 10, as the ninth mass rally for Palestine was about to get underway. McGuinness' target? The growing grassroots movement in support of Palestine.

McGuinness' article, titled "Left-wing populism: Come for the rent caps, stay for the conspiracy theories", purports to be a critique of left-wing populism.

But reading it makes one doubtful she has any understanding of populism.

Instead, McGuinness does what many such commentators do: use the term "left-wing populism" as a pejorative against the growing mass movement.

According to McGuinness, "populism" pits "elites" against "the people". She asserts that "left and right populism can be hard to tell apart [because] their issues are often the same".

While she notes, correctly, that there is a dichotomy between "the people" and "the elites", McGuinness then conflates popular policies, such as rent freezes and rent caps, and the right-wing populism of a figure like Donald Trump.

McGuinness fails to acknowledge important differences between left-wing and right-wing populism.

Left-wing populism involves a struggle for more participatory, or communitarian, democracy: it seeks to mobilise people in politics.

It has been championed by philosophers such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, whose work influenced the [Spanish Podemos movement](#) and Greek Syriza party.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, left-wing populism mobilises people around a [set of demands](#) or "[collectivewill](#)" to change the status quo.

Trump's "strong-man leadership" style epitomises right-wing populism. He appeals to anti-elite sentiment by presenting himself as "non-elite" through techniques such as the use of obscene language and a disregard of political norms.

Right-wing populism mobilises voters by stirring up racism, xenophobia and other reactionary sentiment.

McGuinness' conflation of left- and right-wing populism is deliberate fear-mongering that seeks to undercut support for the nascent mass movement in support of Palestinian liberation.

Her claim that left-wing populism inevitably ("hop, skip, jump") leads to conspiracy theories, is not only unfounded, it is debunked by the very study she cites.

The 2019 [YouGov-Cambridge Globalism Project](#), a survey of more than 25,000 people over 24 countries, found that right-wing populists are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories, such as the COVID-19 vaccine, than others.

That study noted that: "The finding did not hold for voters of Spain's left-wing populist party Podemos, who were less likely to believe in a vaccine conspiracy than voters of most other Spanish parties".

McGuinness describes her interaction with "young university students from Socialist Alliance" to attack young people in general as ignorant and vulnerable to conspiracy theories. She accused *Green Left* and Socialist Alliance of peddling in the "murky world of conspiracy theories".

McGuinness' assertion that *GL* and *SA*'s opposition to the Israeli apartheid state and its genocidal war on Gaza is "populist" and "conspiratorial" reveals the pressure she and the mainstream media are under.

Young people are one of the largest cohorts at the Palestine rallies: they are some of the most vocal for justice for Palestine. According to a recent [YouGov poll](#), 62% of people aged 18-24 years think the federal government should call for an immediate ceasefire.

Increasingly, too, young people [are not relying](#) on establishment media for their news, because they can see through the bias and absurdity of reporting, including by people such as McGuinness.

Contrary to McGuinness' assertion of conspiracy: since 2022, [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) have formally described Israel as an apartheid state.

At the time of writing, more than 24,000 Palestinians have been slaughtered by Israel and still more are facing death by starvation and disease due to the siege. Many experts, including the Israeli Holocaust scholar [Raz Segal](#), have decried Israel's actions as a "textbook case of genocide".

In her final slur, McGuinness tries to argue that there is a direct evolution from progressive anti-

capitalist politics to antisemitism: “One day you’re voting for rental caps, the next you’re peddling the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.”

This is laughable. Even the most casual reader can see such leaps in logic are absurd.

If not for the ruling class’ *modus operandi* — Orwellian doublethink — which gives unfaltering support to capitalist Zionism, it would not be worthwhile responding to McGuinness’ contortions.

We all need to reject and call out attempts to silence resistance to genocide before it is normalised.

The toxic conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism needs to be exposed for what it is: “The repudiation of morality while laying claim to it”, as [1984](#) defines doublethink.

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