

**THIS IS
WHAT
repression
LOOKS
LIKE.**

rising fascism in the colony

As fascist movements grow in strength around the world, political dynamics in so-called Australia are intensifying racism, silencing Black communities, and undermining dissent against the state.

Governments try to present this increasing violence as normal and necessary, meaning it is not always easily identifiable as repression that threatens the freedom and wellbeing of our communities.

As Trump's extremism emboldens racial, gendered and queerphobic violence here, this explainer aims to pick apart the violence we are witnessing, to better understand the forces we're fighting against and how they are interconnected.

Suppressing criticism of the state

Over the 15 months of genocide we have witnessed how interconnected systems of politics, media and the legal system attempt to shut down vital criticism of Israel: student activists suspended by their Universities, Palestinians attacked by media campaigns and anti-genocide protesters unjustly charged.

It has become routine for politicians and media to claim that those who stand up against the state of Israel are antisemitic, racist and threats to peace. This strategy uses a well-worn conflation of antisemitism and anti-Zionism to confuse and distract us. Understanding the distinction between Zionism (a modern colonial ideology) and Judaism (a 3000 year-old religion) is crucial to be able to respond to these claims.

Those defending Israel are twisting the definitions of anti-semitism and racism in an attempt to convince us that standing up against genocide – the most extreme and violent form of racism – is in fact, racist.

Politicians and media extend this illogic to brand any criticism of the state of Israel as racist. Despite this hijacking of the language of fighting racism, like all forms of racism (including Zionism) antisemitism is product of white supremacy. It must be fought in collaboration with Blackfullas and all racialised peoples who are already opposing white supremacy.

These strategies attempt to centre Israel and its supporters as the victims of racism, despite their support of an active genocide. During the intensity of media attacks in Australia, it is integral to remember that while Zionists here may be experiencing discomfort at truth-telling about Israel, it is Palestinians being killed in this genocide and living under military controlled-apartheid and it is Blackfullas, anti-Zionist Jews and racialised people under attack for speaking out here.

Politicians and media are framing criticism of the state as a political and moral threat, arguing suppression of political dissent is required for social cohesion and safety. These escalating campaigns that label people speaking out against Israel as racist and hateful also pose a danger to Indigenous people and anyone challenging the violence of ongoing settler-colonialism. If Palestinians are silenced and vilified by Australian politicians and media for speaking out against Israel, what does this mean for Blackfullas directly challenging the Australian state?

Normalising violence as care & safety

One of the key ways that governments and mainstream media introduce racist policies is by characterising them as care and safety. Historically, this strategy has been used to normalise violence against marginalised communities: forcing Aboriginal people into missions ‘for their own good’, sending the military into NT Aboriginal communities to ‘save the children’, turning back boatloads of refugees to ‘prevent deaths at sea’.

These policies required an increase in government and military powers that is characteristic of rising authoritarianism. As a result, powers that were once seen as extreme became normal, and everyday rights were taken that have never been regained.

Today, the increase of state powers under the guise of ‘care’ and ‘safety’ is rising. Laws to criminalise protest have also been proposed for the supposed ‘safety’ of Jewish communities with no concern for the anti-Zionist Jews who protest alongside Palestinians. Also in the name of ‘safety’, the Queensland government has passed youth justice laws that breach human rights and suspended health services for trans children in the name of ‘care’. As governments attempt to normalise these policies, it is integral we understand the violence that can lie behind the language of safety, care and even antiracism.

What do we do? Stand up fight back!

These attempts to silence criticism of Israel and maintain its impunity are so unrelenting because mass protest and resistance is having an impact, it is shifting the way people understand Israel, global powers and anti-colonial movements. Now, particularly as the ceasefire suggests the violence is over (it's not over until colonialism ends) it is integral we identify these strategies of rising repression, call out attacks on our communities and continue to speak out against settler colonialism.

We are often critical of the racism, colonialism and conservatism of Australian Universities, but they have also been important locations of dissent. In Magand-jin, with our history of both authoritarian repression and vibrant Black resistance, Universities have been important sites of connection and amplification of voices otherwise silenced.

This is a critical time for Australian universities to demonstrate their commitments to intellectual and academic freedom. Our universities must remain places where we can think freely, to explore our world, and to theorise other ways of knowing, being and doing – and organising our social and political worlds.