

Press Release

Open Letter to Director-General of ASIO Mike Burgess from Hizb ut Tahrir / Australia

Mr Burgess,

As Director-General of ASIO, Australians expect you to provide clear, unambiguous and objective advice, to both the government and the Australian public.

What is not accepted is your wading into the public conversation only to deliberately muddy what is already multi-faceted and multi-layered. Australians expect you to provide clarity where confusion exists, especially given the limitations over what you can publicly express.

Your lecture at the 2025 Lowy Lecture, and subsequent public appearances since, has eviscerated any claim to impartiality.

Your acceptance to deliver the 2025 Lowy Lecture is problematic in itself. After two years of a genocide in Gaza, you found it appropriate to extend proximity and legitimacy to an institution whose founder champions internationally recognised war crimes in Palestine. Without a hint of irony, you pontificated about the importance of social cohesion whilst in the company of people that celebrate genocide.

More problematic, your presentation afforded legitimacy to long discredited Zionist efforts seeking to equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. This argument cannot be sustained unless you are suggesting all pro-Palestinian activism equates to antisemitism. Your efforts are no longer intelligence gathering, it is propaganda pandering.

Regarding Hizb ut Tahrir, we have been consistent in word and deed for the entirety of our existence, a fact attested to by every one of your predecessors. If our positions have not changed, then upon what basis has your assessment of Hizb ut Tahrir changed? In the context of Zionist efforts to criminalise pro-Palestinian activism, we hazard to guess the answer.

You diminished the value of the law by problematising its adherence. Staying within the law is not circumventing the law, it is the law. To suggest a nefariousness upon its adherence is to suggest that upon every law-abiding citizen in relation to every law.

You suggested Hizb ut Tahrir deliberately stops short of promoting onshore acts of violence. The suggestion being we do so because it is the law, not because it is our principled position since inception - which you are most aware. What's the alternative being suggested? That if such law did not exist, our advocacy for violence would surface? Or the location of a conflict, onshore versus offshore, alters our position? Or

that when it comes to Muslims, a political assessment over a conflict can only be interpreted as advocacy for violence?

In respect of the Caliphate, your attempt to muddy the waters became most evident when you went off script during your post lecture discussion. Firstly, your invocation of Islamophobic tropes painting Muslims as fifth columns in this country, evidenced through their mere existence, exceeds all bounds of objectivity and impartiality. This lecture was never about presenting facts but about advancing agendas.

You claimed Hizb ut Tahrir is seeking to establish the Caliphate in this country. More concerning, you suggested Hizb ut Tahrir is inclined to enact this through force. You know very well both claims are blatant lies, as every ASIO assessment will attest, yet you accepted to cross every professional boundary by serving as nothing more than a propaganda mouthpiece for those seeking to demonise Islam and Muslims.

You made the outrageous claim Hizb ut-Tahrir is responsible for fuelling antisemitism in this country, a claim not even the entity's Diaspora Affairs report on Antisemitism in Australia has claimed. In fact, they did not mention Hizb ut Tahrir at all in its report, which means one of you is lying. Of course, your argument predictably rests upon the tired cliche equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism.

But you were precise with your words in your speech, claiming you 'fear' such a development around antisemitism, not that such a development is rooted and evidenced in fact. But your feigned trepidation was undone in your post lecture discussion, when you revealed such 'fears' rests on nothing more than 'vibes'. Whilst we maintain the inhumanity of your defence of genocide, we are still prepared to acknowledge your own humanity. Unfortunately, though, ASIO assessments are supposed to be rooted in intelligence, not feelings, and your poor attempt to mischaracterise Hizb ut Tahrir, the Muslim community and all pro-Palestinian activism leaves you condemned.

Instead of correcting the public record in respect of your lies and disinformation, you have doubled down on your propaganda by repeating and even exceeding your claims. Most recently, you were quoted on Sky News as saying in respect of Hizb ut Tahrir:

"It's just an example of a group that will claim that they're talking about the Middle East and only Israel, but when they're taking about Israel and rising up against Israel, and even though they'll say it's a peaceful rise, in this environment ... people are conflating the nation of Israel with Jewish Australians," ... "It is driving permission for violence in our society, and they know they're doing that when they do that."

No, Mr Burgess, 'people are not conflating the nation of ['Israel'] with Jewish Australians', you are conflating the nation of ['Israel'] with Jewish Australians when you seek to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. If you are so ostensibly concerned about the safety of Jewish Australians, then perhaps you should stop advancing the single, most self-defeating claim unironically fuelling antisemitism itself.

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