Understanding Anti-Palestinian Racism

A six-month analysis into an unnamed and suppressed racism

Anti- العنصرية
Palestinian ضد
Racism الفلسطينيين

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Introduction

The Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) acknowledges that this report was written on unceded, stolen Aboriginal Lands and we hold ourselves accountable to the Indigenous People whose Lands we live and work on. APAN pays our respect to Elders past and present. We respect the sovereignty of First Nations peoples and their relationships to Country, community, rivers, seas and each other. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience systemic, structural, and everyday racism and injustice as a legacy and continuation of colonisation. We are proud to note the rich and longstanding history of Blak-Palestinian solidarity, and commit ourselves to the ongoing work required to dismantle racism and foster genuine cultural safety.

The Anti-Palestinian Racism Project was developed in response to the growing and alarming reports of Anti-Palestinian racism being experienced in the community. As part of the development process we also looked at the global context and consulted with the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association and the US-based Institute for the Understanding of Anti-Palestinian Racism who had been working in this area. APAN has also engaged with other local and government organisations including the Islamophobia Register Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission as part of the project. APAN also acknowledges the Victorian Government's support for the Anti-Palestinian Racism Project.

In addition, an independent Advisory Committee was developed consisting of nine members encompassing leaders in the Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and anti-Zionist Jewish communities, as well as experts across anti-racism frameworks, law, education, and community development. The purpose of the voluntary Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and guidance on effective approaches to preventing and combatting anti-Palestinian racism.

APAN launched the Anti-Palestinian Racism register on 30 November 2025 to assess the prevalence and impacts of anti-Palestinian racism on Palestinians, those perceived to be Palestinian, and allies across Australia. On 30 April 2026, APAN published the 'Anti-Palestinian Racism Preliminary Report' - an analysis of the 264 incidents reported within a three-month period since the launch of the register.[1] The report findings were an attempt to make anti-Palestinian racism more visible and understood among individuals, community organisations, policy and decision makers.

Anti-Palestinian racism (APR) occurs through the suppression, denial, silencing, and exclusion of Palestinian culture, heritage, and liberatory movement practices carried out by Palestinians and their allies.[2] Anti-Palestinian racism is a distinct phenomenon to be investigated and researched for use in policymaking, legal cases, advocacy, and activism, working within broader anti-racist and anti-colonial projects and frameworks.[3]

Anti-Palestinian racism targets those that identify as Palestinian, and on this continent particularly Palestinian-Australians, and advocates for human rights. The impact of anti-Palestinian racism can be seen through a wider target lens as it impacts many more individuals as they can be perceived as Palestinian or as standing alongside Palestinians. Fundamentally, as the Institute for the Understanding of Anti-Palestinian Racism notes, the "Palestinian identity is always at the core of anti-Palestinian racism, even when it affects non-Palestinians".[4]

This newly launched report provides further insight into anti-Palestinian racism, its pervasiveness and the harmful impact it has on the Palestinian community and the wider public through analysis of six months of incidents reported to the APR National Register.

Anti-Palestinian Racism – An anti-racist framework

In order to understand what anti-Palestinian racism is, one must understand - as Lana Tatour states in 'Race and the Question of Palestine' - that the "colonisation of Palestine - like other imperial, colonial, and settler-colonial projects - cannot be understood outside the grammar of race".[5]

The naming and framing of anti-Palestinian racism serves a dual purpose. First, it empowers affected Palestinians and those who advocate for Palestinian human rights to recognise and articulate instances of marginalisation, discrimination, and racism. Second, it provides a structural framework for institutional, organisational, and corporate entities to develop and implement anti-racist policies and interventions to mitigate systemic racism.[6]

In this current climate, we are witnessing deep, deep anti-Palestinian racism that animates Western attitudes towards Palestinians and their allies that allows for the genocide to continue in Palestine, the occupation and ethnic cleansing of Southern Lebanon, and the stealing of First Nations lands on this continent to produce drone technologies for Israel. It is important to understand anti-Palestinian racism in order to address the many intersectional and personal harms caused by this form of racism.



Photo credit: Kenula Abeywickrama

What is Anti-Palestinian Racism?

Anti-Palestinian Racism refers to conduct, policies, or institutional practices that, by **intent or effect**, produce unequal, exclusionary, or harmful outcomes for Palestinians, Palestinian Australians, or those perceived as Palestinian. It also impacts those that support and/or advocate for human rights, justice and liberation/freedom for the Palestinian people ('allies').

Anti-Palestinian Racism silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanises Palestinians and/or their narratives.[7] It is demonstrated in three forms: individual, institutional and structural. Together, these three levels compose systemic anti-Palestinian racism.

Unlike the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and Universities Australia definitions of antisemitism, anti-Palestinian racism does not seek to stifle critique, analysis or discussion. Instead, the anti-Palestinian racism framework is centred on challenging intersections of power by naming and describing the lived experience of victims, and the violence enacted through structures, systems, policies and activities that further bolster discrimination and racism, rather than address them within holistic anti-racism frameworks.

Anti-Palestinian racism may be indicated by one or more of the following patterns:

1 Racial Vilification and Dehumanisation

Racial Vilification & Dehumanisation - The toleration or normalisation of language, conduct, or associations that portray Palestinians as inherently violent, extremist, hateful, deceptive, or collectively responsible for acts of violence, resulting in loss of dignity or safety.

2 Suppression of Political, Cultural, or Community Expression

Suppression of Political, Cultural, or Community Expression - The restriction, removal, cancellation, or disproportionate scrutiny of Palestinian expression, participation, or representation - cultural, political, or communal - on grounds such as "divisiveness," "security," "reputational risk," "cultural sensitivity," "community safety," or "appropriate timing" without equivalent standards applied to other racialised or protected groups.[8]

3 Denial of Peoplehood, Identity, or Equal Participation

Denial of Peoplehood, Identity, or Equal Participation - The refusal to recognise, support, or resource Palestinian identity, community activity, or cultural expression on the basis that such identity is inherently illegitimate, political, or uniquely problematic, including the denial that Palestinians are a group as such and/or denial that they are indigenous.

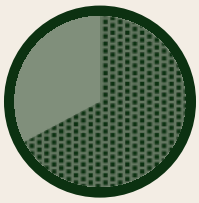
4 Differential Standards and Selective Enforcement

Differential Standards & Selective Enforcement - The application of institutional rules, codes of conduct, or safety policies in a manner that treats Palestinian-related speech, symbols, or assembly as more threatening, disruptive, or unacceptable than functionally comparable expression by other groups.

Key Findings

Between 30th November 2025 and 31st May 2026

373
incidents were reported



67.2%
not their first incident of APR

Between 30 November 2025 and 31 May 2026, 373 incidents of anti-Palestinian racism were reported. When analysing monthly reporting volume, reports were highest in December 2025 and January 2026 (94 and 84 responses respectively, shortly after the Bondi attack), followed by a decline and plateau at 28-39 incidents reported per month from March to May 2026.

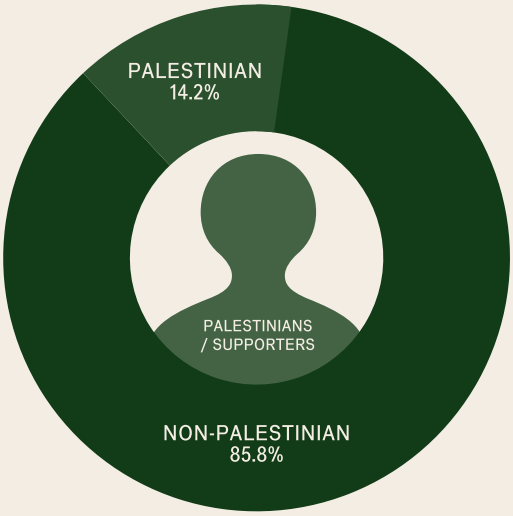
Two-thirds of respondents (67.2%) reported that this was not their first experience of anti-Palestinian racism. However, when analysing whether respondents previously reported their experiences of anti-Palestinian racism, reporting behaviors showed that repeat-experience respondents reported incidents at a lower rate (35.6%) than first-timers (43.5%) - the opposite of what might be expected. This lines up with one of the top reasons given for not reporting incidents in an APR survey question: "earlier attempts to report did not go anywhere". These findings suggest repeated exposure to racist incidents may erode confidence in reporting mechanisms, which is further compounded by high levels of distrust in systems made available within institutions across sectors.

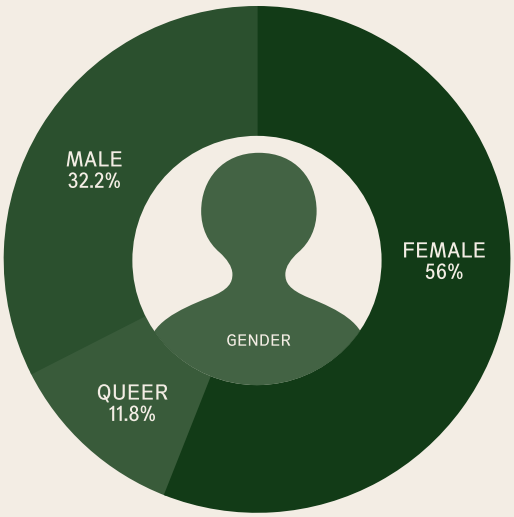
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Demographic data reiterated the racial and ethnic diversity of respondents experiencing anti-Palestinian racism.

The majority of respondents identified as **non-Palestinian**

Those identifying as Palestinian amounted to 14.2% of respondents, with 85.8% identifying as either Arab, Black, Indigenous, Asian, or White, underscoring the harmful effects of anti-Palestinian racism across a broad spectrum of multicultural, multi-faith, and ally groups within Australia.





Most respondents identified as **female**

In addition, the majority of respondents identified as female (56%), with members of the LGBTQI+ community accounting for 11.8% of respondents, underlining how gendered violence and racism in all its manifestations are inter-linked.[9]

Reporting instances on behalf of other people

Another key finding showed 74.4% of reports describe racism that happened directly to the respondent, versus 25.6% reported on behalf of someone else (a colleague, family member, or community member) - most respondents are speaking from lived experience, not just as witnesses or advocates.

Anti-Palestinian racism here is overwhelmingly rhetorical and social

When analysing the nature of anti-Palestinian racism and its impact on victims, the results were alarming. The four most common forms of racism were **rhetorical/social**, not physical. **Smearing/defaming** (34.3%), **dehumanising** (31.1%), **demonisation** (28.9%) and **silencing** (28.4%) are each far more common than **physical violence** (4.8%) or **death threats** (4.3%).

Anti-Palestinian racism here is overwhelmingly **rhetorical and social**, which has implications for how institutions are trained to recognise it. In addition, the average incident of anti-Palestinian racism **involved at least three (3) different forms of racism** (e.g. smearing + dehumanising + silencing together) - these are compounding, multi-dimensional experiences.

" How has this racism experience impacted you? "

36.7%
Stress

30%
Feeling intimidated

26.5%
Hypervigilance

26.5%
Fearfulness

24.7%
Anxiety

17.4%
Self-censorship

16.4%
Depression

15.3%
Withdrawal / isolation

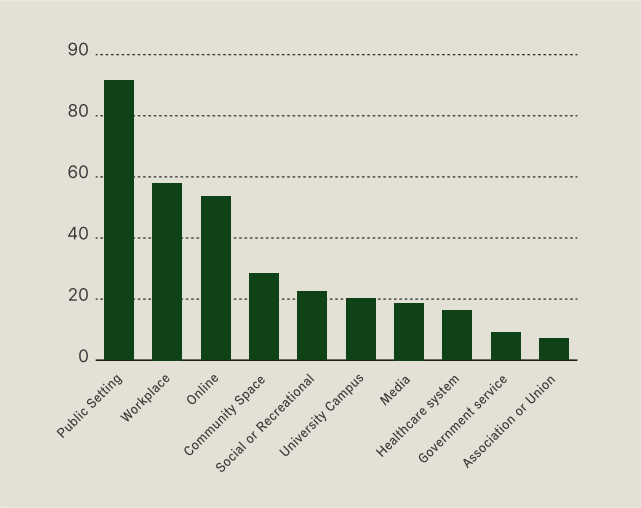
9.4%
Self Doubt

Stress (36.7%), **feeling intimidated** (30.0%), **hypervigilance** and **fearfulness** (26.5% each) were the most common impacts for over 90 respondents - **psychological** and **emotional harm dominates,** well ahead of physical impacts like **headaches** (4.3%) or **physical pain** (2.4%).

This further emphasises how anti-Palestinian racism impacts **mental-health and wellbeing**. The average affected respondent to the national APR register reported **four distinct psychological** or **social impacts** - further substantiating that experiences of anti-Palestinian racism are compounding, multi-dimensional and have significant ongoing effects.

Location of Incidents

When respondents were asked where they experienced anti-Palestinian racism, **public settings** (86), **workplaces** (59) and **online spaces** (52) were the three most common areas of APR reported on the national register. **University campuses** (20), **the media** (20), and **healthcare systems** (19) ranked in the top ten settings where respondents reported experiencing anti-Palestinian racism.



Respondents by State

Despite similar overall incident volumes in the national APR Register, Victoria respondents were much more likely to have previously reported anti-Palestinian racism (46%) utilising other reporting mechanisms than their NSW counterparts (31%). Victoria (117) and NSW (102) together account for approximately 59% of all incidents, far ahead of WA (25) and QLD (21).

117
occurred in Victoria

21
in Queensland

15
in ACT

102
in NSW

25
Western Australia

13 SA
4 in NT, TAS

Anti-Palestinian Racism across the social landscape

Workplace harassment and identity-based association

The six-months of reporting data revealed at least ten incidents where individuals - whether Palestinian or allies - experienced racial vilification or dehumanisation, and differential standards being applied simply for wearing and/or displaying the watermelon symbol in the workplace.

> “ Admin colleague in a public hospital [was] told to remove a watermelon pin as deemed to be offensive. No other person asked to remove their pride flag, [I]ndigenous flags, Australia flag.

> “ Someone complained about a bag I carry at work. I was called in about it. I wasn’t told not to bring it in, but I was made to feel like it’s not allowed. It has a watermelon, tatreez embroidery and the shape of the land.

> “ I had a small watercolour drawing of a watermelon and an olive branch on my desk at work. My manager asked me if I knew what the watermelon symbol was associated with, to which I replied yes. She then advised me that a complaint had been made, and it was ‘inappropriate’ to display a watermelon in the workplace. Meanwhile, colleagues are able to display Trump 2024 paraphernalia (including MAGA inspired items) at their desks in the same office.

All the above three real-world experiences demonstrate how comparable cultural, political or religious expression by other employees does not attract similar commentary or tolerance of harassment. This is further exacerbated when Managers or HR staff are aware of the conduct, but treat incidents as either “political disagreement” or place the victim (ie the individual with a watermelon pin) under stress and pressure to remove said symbols or risk unemployment.

The very association of an employee’s identity with false accusations of “terrorism”, “offense”, or collective guilt constitutes racial vilification. Treating such conduct as a political dispute rather than harassment results in a hostile work environment and exposes the institution to WHS risk through foreseeable psychosocial harm.[10] The institutional response (by the workplace) should have addressed the conduct each of the above individuals experienced as racial harassment, and applied codes of conduct, documented corrective action, and ensured the workplace was free from vilification and dehumanisation.

Suppression of Cultural or Political Expression

Documented in the national APR register, the three case studies highlighted below prove that restricting legal Palestinian expression by calling it inherently divisive or unsafe, without specific evidence of risk, is a blatant and disproportionate suppression of cultural and political voice. Controversy or offence are not, and should not, be a sufficient basis for differential treatment. Under the APR Framework, treating Palestinian identity, community activity, or political advocacy for Palestine, as uniquely illegitimate, risky, or "upsetting" results in exclusion, silencing, and denial, and thus fundamentally establishes unequal access to resources, opportunities, and recognition afforded to others solely based on Palestinian identity or affiliation with said identity.

> "Since the genocide work has harrassed [and] threatened colleagues with misconduct for attending or discussing protests, Palestine or the genocide. [This includes] outside of work on social media or at work. It is an overreach of the workplace into our personal lives: what we discuss, rallies we attend or posts we make outside of the workplace. I work for Legal Aid NSW. Since the genocide we have been harrassed threatened with misconduct from our employer for posts, rallies, and discussions re the genocide weather it be in or outside the workplace.

> "I overheard some of my colleagues talking about which Indigenous music artists they would invite to perform at a council event. They said Miss Kanina is 'too staunch' in her values and eliminated her from consideration. Then they said 'Moju has a post about Palestine and Bondi, so not them'. They landed on an Indigenous artist that didn't have publicly known opinions on the colonisation of Palestine. It felt very tokenistic, hearing them go down the list of Indigenous artists and felt like they wanted the Indigenous artists but not indigenous politics or views."

The above real-world scenarios show how anti-Palestinian racism can manifest through selective decision-making, inconsistent risk analyses, and unequal execution of institutional policies. Institutions ought to apply a consistency test across all decision-making surfaces to identify and remediate patterns of differential treatment before they result in legal, safety, or governance exposure. The adoption of an interpretive framework - related to anti-Palestinian racism or otherwise - does not exempt organisations from its statutory obligations. Institutions on this continent hold ultimate responsibility and liability under Australian anti-discrimination and workplace safety legislation.

Conclusion

APAN is releasing this 6-month report to highlight the profound and flagrant racism experienced by the wider community on this continent, and the physical and psycho-social harms affiliated with such racism. At the time of writing, the national APR register has recorded over 500 incidents.

APAN calls on federal and state governments, universities, employers, public and private institutions to:

- **Formally recognise anti-Palestinian racism** within national and institutional anti-racism frameworks.
- **Hold institutions accountable** for discrimination and ensure accessible, effective complaints mechanisms.
- **End the suppression of Palestinian identity and advocacy,** including discriminatory restrictions on cultural symbols, peaceful protest and political expression.
- **Ensure Palestinian communities are meaningfully consulted** in developing anti-racism policies and protections.

APAN's Anti-Palestinian Racism Project continues to carry out research and analysis of incidents on the register. We endeavor to roll out additional public advocacy campaigns, reports and resources, and education workshops over the next year to engage the wider community in better understanding how anti-Palestinian racism manifests, and how we can incorporate frameworks to better combat racism within institutions across sectors.

Anti-Palestinian racism must be addressed directly, urgently, and immediately. It must not continue to be under-represented, suppressed or swept under the rug through the use of racism policies and approaches that prioritise certain communities' safety over others. We once again reiterate that anti-Palestinian racism and any other form of racism must be addressed and tackled under holistic anti-racism frameworks that centre and apply First Nations histories, knowledge, approaches and learning.

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