**Antisemitism in Australia**

Hate crimes against Jewish people in Australia have increased by 35% since last year (Nathan, 2022). Good morning Queensland youth parliament, my name is James, and I am here to talk about the fastest growing form of racism in Australia. Antisemitism is the hostility to or prejudice against Jewish people (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). The history of antisemitism dates back to ancient time, from the third century BC in Egypt by the Egyptians to the first century AD in Judea by the Romans. It has also continued into the modern age, with the most infamous example being the tragedy of the Holocaust. Much of contemporary antisemitism can be split into two categories, conspiracists who believe that the Jewish people secretly control the world and Islamic extremists who show disdain towards Jewish people on the basis of their religious beliefs. This speech will primarily focus on the former, however this not to say that the latter is any less evil. These conspiracists believe the myth of a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions. Jewish people make up almost one percent of the total Australian population with approximately 200,000 people and is the sixth most practised religion in Australia. Any discrimination against a group of people based on their immutable characteristics is clearly unjust, especially that of such a significant minority group in Australia’s multicultural society, the Jewish.

The effects of antisemitism on everyday Jews are significant even in Australian society. According to the executive Council of Australian Jewry, since 2020 acts of antisemitism have increased by 42% (Nathan 2022). This massive increase has caused the state governments such as Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria to ban the public display of various Nazi symbolism. Extreme antisemitism primarily comes from religious and political extremists, it is mostly condemned by the majority of Australian society. Even so, antisemitism still appears in the media and more mainstream politics in a usually more mild and degrading form. This usually ranges from insensitive and outright incorrect holocaust analogies to misrepresentations of the ongoing Israel Palestinian conflicts. An example of the former is Australian senator George Christensen on a podcast hosted by far-right extremist Alex Jones. During which Christensen laughs at Jones’ comparison of Australian COVID-19 quarantine facilities with Auschwitz because they both had "big fences". This trivialisation and minimisation of this targeted genocide of the Jewish people desensitises people to the evils of Nazism and antisemitism as a whole. Modern explicit examples of antisemitism in mainstream media are quite rare, however the following article by Australian online news outlet redflag written in 2019 is an example from a more fringe media outlet. This piece covers the controversial Palestinian speaker Remi Kanazi and the “Smear campaign trying to block (his) visa” as the title of this article suggests (Abunimah, 2019). This article refers to “The Jewish Lobby in Australia” as the leader of this campaign. This phrasing is incredible misleading and borderline false. In fact, it was only one Jewish organisation, the Anti-Defamation Commission, which objected to the speaker’s visit (Nathan, 2022). The so-called “lobbying campaign” consisted of a single letter sent by the ADC to David Coleman, the immigration minister. Characterising the work of a single organisation as the action of “The Jewish Lobby” is antisemitic on its face and propagates lies about the Jewish people more generally. In the end, Remi’s visa was accepted and nothing more came of this situation. Standing up to misinformation is the best way to remove its potency in society, if people know something is false and create awareness, it will create a safer Australia for all targeted minorities, especially Jewish Australians.

Since neo-Nazis are self-proclaimed followers of the most prolific anti-Semite in modern history, it would follow that they too would have a firm hatred for the Jews. Justification of this abhorrent belief includes the false assertion that Jewish secretly people control the world from the shadows. These beliefs on their own do not cause violence, however create a strong motive to commit a hate crime. This clearly endangers anyone who happens to be of the Jewish race or practices its associated religion, and is why the spread of these lies is so detrimental. A major aspect to the neo-Nazi’s beliefs is that of Holocaust denial. They suggest that the whole event was a hoax, using bogus statistics and denying blatant facts. The first and most prolific piece of “evidence” is the idea that it was impossible for so many people to be have killed by the Nazi. This comes from a report written by American execution equipment manufacturer and neo-Nazi Fred Leuchter. In this report he makes outrageous assertions such as the gas chambers would have needed to have been aired for a week before it could be used again, each person would take up one square meter in the chamber and other completely disproven assertions. Since this bogus report is the main reason people believe that this tragedy never even happened, it creates people who believe that the Jewish people are lying to them in some kind of attempt to gather sympathy from society. This can make these misinformed people turn violent on Jews, and yet another reason to raise awareness about misinformation spread by these racist conspiracists.

The primary cause of this type of antisemitism in the modern age is the internet. The capacity for the internet to radicalise people into holding extreme beliefs is well documented. The reason for this is quite obvious, on the internet you can surround yourself with people of any belief. As seen in history in things such as slavery, when people are surrounded by people who believe these heinous actions are okay, their morals can be skewed into something widely socially unacceptable. The same thing happens on the internet. People become socially manipulated into believing things they would never think were true even a month ago. Education about this phenomenon of gradual radicalisation on the internet would allow people to recognise what is happening to them and make steps to remove themselves from this hateful environment. This would remove power from these violent extremists and reduce the amount of violent and criminal acts these people commit.

As seen in this speech, the awareness and education of misinformed anti-Semites in Australia is integral to the safety of the Australian Jews. If we can discredit misinformation when we find it and let others know that antisemitism is unacceptable in society, together, we can create a fairer society for the future.

References:

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