



Labor minister in heated clash with Palestine activists

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Body

The Albanese government's most senior Muslim woman has been verbally attacked by pro-Palestinian activists, amid a sustained campaign to target Labor politicians over the Gaza-Israel war.

Early Childhood Education Minister **Anne Aly** - the nation's first female Muslim minister - was involved in a heated confrontation with pro-Palestine activists during a "meet your member" event at a suburban Perth park on the weekend.

Plain-clothed Australian Federal Police officers had to intervene to shut down the event as tensions between Dr Aly and the activists rose.

As Dr Aly left the scene, activists could be heard calling her a "coward" and one woman shouted "don't call yourself a Muslim". Chants of "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" broke out as Dr Aly was ushered away.

The interaction began harmlessly, with a man introducing himself as a student studying early childhood education. But Dr Aly quickly became visibly uncomfortable as the man began talking about the impact of **Australia**'s decision to pause funding to the United Nations agency in Gaza, UNRWA.

At one point Dr Aly moved to push away a picture of [a starving Palestinian boy](#). Later, she had to be held back by her husband Dave Allen and a staff member from re-engaging with the activists.

Dr Aly was born in Egypt before migrating to **Australia** as a child. Her ancestry and her Muslim faith has made her a target for pro-Palestine activists who believe she and her government are not doing enough to protect people in Gaza.

During the confrontation, Dr Aly referred to how her father had fought for Egypt against Israel during the Six Day War of 1967.

"My father fought in the war. And what have you done?" she asked one of the protesters.

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She said those wanting to see a resolution to the conflict had to give up on the "dream" that Israel would spontaneously lay down its weapons without a negotiated truce.

"I would love a ceasefire to happen. We would all agree on that, correct? What has become increasingly clear is the only way a ceasefire is going to happen is through a negotiation led by Egypt and Qatar," she said.

Dr Aly told the activists that Israel was losing the broader international support that they had previously enjoyed.

Democratic Senate majority chief Chuck Schumer, the highest-ranking elected Jewish American official in history, last week [called for Israel to hold new elections](#) after labelling Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [one of the "major obstacles" to peace](#).

Dr Aly told the activists that Mr Netanyahu's agenda had become "very clear".

"He has ruled the far right section of the Israeli government who have voiced openly their desire for the annihilation and annexation of Gaza," Dr Aly told the activists.

"It is a concern to the Egyptians, it is a concern to the region, and it is a concern to me as it is a concern to you."

In a statement to The Australian, Dr Aly said: "I will continue to take every opportunity to talk with people from my local community about the issues that matter to them."

Dr Aly's community meetings had been flagged by Friends of Palestine WA, which - in a message posted to the organisation's Facebook group - urged its followers to use the events to "tell federal Labor member **Anne Aly** what you think about her government's appalling record of support for Israel's genocide over the past five months".

Pro-Palestine and anti-Israel activism has increased dramatically around [Australia](#) since Hamas' October 7 attacks.

The Australian late last year revealed how some radical anti-Israel groups have been circulating guides advising on [how to sabotage and vandalise property](#), track Jewish shipping interests and evade police.

The co-chief executive of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Alex Ryvchin, told The Australian that while he didn't agree with some of Dr Aly's statements, he admired her for responding to the harassment with "dignity and strength".

"The incident demonstrates once again that anti-Israel protesters aren't interested in constructive engagement. They believe only in slogans that make them feel morally superior and deceive the public into thinking they support peace," he said.

"In reality, they adhere to a fanatical worldview in which Israel is the supreme evil and anything done to its people is justified, even if it results in more defeat and more suffering for the Palestinians they claim to support. It is critical that leaders understand this perverse mindset and never yield to this hatred or allow it to influence their policies and public statements."

Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong on Friday announced that [Australian funding of UNRWA would resume](#) after the government received assurances that the agency itself was not a terrorist organisation.

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