

'Mob rule': Senator warns attacks on minorities are shredding social fabric



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Highlight: Liberal senator Dave Sharma says **Australia** risks lasting damage to society from a rise in threats to Jewish Australians and other minorities.

Body

Liberal senator Dave Sharma has warned of lasting damage to Australian society from a rise in threats to Jewish Australians, declaring that everyone will lose if nothing is done to stop mob attacks on a minority.

Sharma described the attacks as "incredibly dangerous" because of the threat to the nation's social fabric and the risk that other minorities could one day suffer the same intimidation and vilification.

[Link to Image](#)

Alex Ellinghausen

The warning comes as Jewish and Islamic groups report a rise in attacks founded on racial or religious intolerance.

The federal government has vowed to proceed with stronger laws against hate speech.

Sharma, who entered the Senate at the end of last year after having served in the lower house and as ambassador to Israel, said **Australia** had avoided sectarian violence because it had a shared sense of civic values, but the country could not take this for granted.

"Discrimination, vilification, harassment and intimidation against the Jewish community in **Australia** has reached unprecedented levels," he said, in his first speech to the Senate.

"I understand that people in **Australia** feel strongly, and differ in their views widely, about the rights and wrongs of the current conflict in the Middle East, and the terrible human suffering and tragedy that has accompanied it.

"What we have seen in recent months has clearly crossed the Rubicon, and resulted in one community - and one community alone, the Australian Jewish community - being made to feel unwelcome in their own country, fearful in their own neighbourhoods, and anxious about the future they face here.

"This is utterly unacceptable. It is also incredibly dangerous.

"Jewish Australians are no more responsible for Israel's conduct of this war than Palestinian Australians are responsible for Hamas' terrorist attack that prompted it."

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Sharma described the attacks in **Australia** as "mob rule" and intimidation and said Australian leaders had "muted their voices" on the issue, while institutions had neglected their duty to protect the social compact.

"Today it might be Jewish Australians, but tomorrow it will be another group or another minority against which the forces of the populist mob are unleashed," he said. "Down that road lies civil turmoil and national disunity. Staying quiet, sitting on the sidelines, and hoping it will all go away is a complete failure of leadership."

The Islamophobia Register **Australia** has warned of a surge in Islamophobia in the wake of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, while the Executive Council of Australian Jewry said there had been a 738 per cent increase in antisemitism.

Protests in support of the Palestinian people have also heightened concerns in Parliament House about threats to politicians and the disruption of public events.

Early Childhood Minister **Anne Aly**, who was born and raised in Egypt and is one of **Australia**'s first Muslim ministers, was berated by pro-Palestinian protesters at a "meet and greet" with her community on the weekend but she said it would not change her conduct.

[Link to Image](#)

Alex Ellinghausen

"I will continue to take every opportunity to talk with people from my local community about the issues that matter to them. This kind of behaviour won't stop me," she said.

Sharma told this masthead he was appalled at the aggression towards Aly.

The Liberal senator's first speech to the upper house also called for stronger federal reform to boost competition among big companies.

"What we have witnessed is a rapid redistribution of national income," he said. "Big business has won. Workers and small businesses have lost.

"**Australia** now has one of the most concentrated economies in the developed world."

On housing costs, Sharma said the biggest solution was a focus on increasing supply and that this meant **Australia** had to find a way to build more homes, more quickly.

"Until we are able to accelerate our pace of home building, we need to reduce our immigration intake, or else we will simply place further pressure on our housing market," he said.

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Graphic

NSW senator Dave Sharma.

Early Childhood Education Minister **Anne Aly**.

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