

Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

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יהודי אוסטרליה

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19 August 2008

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ECAJ REGARDING THE MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY WEBSITE - KHALDOUN

The President of the ECAJ, Robert Goot AM SC, today issued the following statement.

“According to its website *Khaldoun*

‘is a site that places scholarly and informed perspectives into the public realm to promote understanding, tolerance and ultimate peace in the Middle East. Comments that are racist or discriminatory...are not acceptable. Such comments will be removed and the responsible party barred from commenting on this blog. Free speech comes with obligations of human decency and comments must meet the basic expectations of a rational, tolerant and inclusive society....’

“Not only is much of the comment on the *Khaldoun* website neither scholarly nor informed but contrary to the website policy, it neither promotes understanding nor tolerance. It is punctuated by contributions which are nasty, intimidatory and pernicious.

“The tenor of many of the blogs on the website would undoubtedly discourage pro Israeli correspondents from participating. It is apparent that the website is not being monitored by the University as it ought to be and as it claims to be.

“Perhaps more significantly however, the website is a manifestation of what appears to be a lack of rigorous academic standards and balance in the course “*Introduction to Middle East politics*” (POL 166) at Macquarie University.

“At the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict lies a contest between two competing historical narratives. The two narratives have been so at odds

that dialogue has been almost impossible. To outsiders, the protagonists appear to inhabit different universes. After 100 years of conflict, each side is still largely deaf to the other's case and often unwilling to accept the other's right to determine its own destiny in its own part of the Holy Land.

“This makes it all the more important for rigorous academic standards to be adhered to in all aspects of the study of the conflict. At a minimum, the personal biases of the authors of prescribed texts and of teachers of the subject ought to be disclosed to students at the outset of any course of study.

“In the Macquarie University Introduction to Middle East Politics course, anti-Israel course material is required reading while pro-Israel material is recommended reading only (that is it is not covered in class). The necessary intellectual diversity and balance is therefore missing; the selection of authors listed is skewed heavily towards traditional Palestinian and Arab historians who support the conventional Arab/Palestinian narrative as recounted by official Arab sources or Israeli ‘revisionists’ or ‘new historians’ whose focus is on a reputation of some of the basic tenets of the traditional Israeli narrative and, to a much lesser extent, on a refutation of some of the basic tenets of the traditional Palestinian and Arab narrative.

“The skewing of course content and reading materials to give preponderance to one particular point of view or school of thought is a subtle but insidious way of brainwashing young minds. This ought not to be tolerated.

“Where universities fail to self regulate such matters, there needs to be a procedure by way of appeal or complaint, to a high level balance academic panel to deal with allegations of abuses”.

End of Statement