

MEDIA RELEASE

In his column in the Weekend Herald (19-20 June 2010), Michael Carlton referred to certain emails that passed between him and me in the previous week. Carlton's account of the content of those emails is incomplete. I set out below the complete text of those emails to enable readers to make their own judgment about their content.

Please note that:

1. I did not respond at all to Carlton's first article in the SMH on June 6-7;
2. I condemned unreservedly the hate-emails received by Carlton in response to that first article, regardless of their alleged source;
3. I did not mention or refer to the Holocaust;
4. I did not make any comment about Carlton's criticisms of Israeli policies or actions;
5. I assured Carlton that none of the organizations that advocate on behalf of the Jewish community and Israel would have had anything to do with the hate-emails he received;
6. I observed that not one of those organizations (including the ECAJ) appears to have made any response at all to Carlton's first article; and
7. I invited Carlton to meet face to face to discuss these matters more fully but I received no response.

My reason for emailing Carlton was as stated:

"You presume – indeed you assert as a fact in your reply - that all the people who sent you abusive emails in response to your first article were (i) Jewish and (ii) acting in concert with one another and (iii) following some vast global plan. That is simply incorrect and it unjustly defames the legitimate representative organisations, which argue their case fairly and have a right to a fair hearing, including from journalists."

Robert M Goot AM SC | President
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**Executive Council of
Australian Jewry**

From: Robert Goot
Sent: Monday, 14 June 2010 5:18 PM

To: smhcarlton@gmail.com
Subject: Your 12-13 June Column
Importance: High

Dear Mr Carlton

I refer to your piece, '*Funny, they remember their epithets but not their manners*', which appeared in the Weekend edition of the Sydney Morning Herald on June 12-13. You quote from a number of hate emails you received from various individuals in response to an earlier article you had written and say that these were "orchestrated from Jerusalem" by "the Jewish lobby".

There is absolutely no evidence to support that statement or your suggestion that the emails were sent to you because an Israeli official has urged supporters of Israel to exercise their right of free speech and to "spread the real version of events".

My organisation, and its constituent and affiliate Jewish organisations throughout Australia, condemn unreservedly the physical threats that were made against you, regardless of the alleged ethnic background of those who made the them, as well as the abusive language and tone of the emails you describe in your article.

I also completely reject your suggestion that these threats and abusive emails were orchestrated in any way by the Israeli government or any Jewish organisation. To suggest that the threats and abuse directed at you were part of some sinister international plot by "the Jewish lobby" is to invoke an old and insidious racist stereotype, one of several alluded to in your article. This is beneath you. To my knowledge, your earlier article did not elicit a response from any Jewish organisation in Australia or elsewhere, and certainly not in the kind of intemperate terms you have described.

You say that it is "standard operating procedure for the lobby to hurl accusations of anti-Semitism". That is another falsehood. But it is "standard operating procedure" for those accused of antisemitism to assure the world that they have "Jewish friends".

Events in the Middle East tend to evoke strong emotional reactions from both supporters and opponents of Israel's actions. During the last fortnight alone, two students at the University of Sydney were assaulted and harrassed on campus merely for expressing an opinion in support of Israel. When feelings are running high, individuals take it upon themselves to make physical threats, use abusive language and do other stupid things. It is equally stupid, and irresponsible, for a reputable journalist such as yourself to attribute their actions to an organisation, more so a government, whose policies and interests are completely opposed to such actions.

Yours sincerely

Robert M Goot AM SC | President

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From: Mike Carlton <smhcarlton@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 2010 20:39:02 +1000

To: Robert Goot

Subject: Re: Your 12-13 June Column

Dear Mr Goot

So there we go again. You might not like the term "Jewish lobby" but, deny it though you will, the thing exists. It is amorphous, inchoate but above all, intimidatory. Every journalist or media figure in this country who has ever offered a word critical of Israel has encountered it.

Your language is more polished than most but, typically, you accuse me of falsehoods, stupidity, intemperance, irresponsibility and of invoking an "old and insidious racist stereotype."

Furthermore, you suggest that I am an anti-Semite resorting to a trick of assuring the world that I have Jewish friends.

That is all grossly offensive. I resent it, and I will not be beaten down by it, whether it comes above your official letterhead or in the rabid abuse of others.

For your information:

- I am entirely content that Israel should exist as a free and independent Jewish homeland.
- I have been to Dachau. Twice. I have met and interviewed Holocaust survivors and been profoundly humbled by their stories. Most of all, perhaps, by the sight of the SS numbers tattooed on their arms.
- I have no brief for Hamas, any more than I do for the psychopaths of my own ethnic background, the IRA.
- Nor do I have illusions about the methods of Palestinian extremism. My wife, an ABC journalist, was once arrested in Lebanon by Hezbollah.

What I do object to is Israel's brutal and unconscionable oppression of the people of Gaza. And the attempts, in this country and around the world, by people like yourself, to silence those who speak out about it.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Carlton.

From: Robert Goot
Date: Wed, 16 Jun 2010 13:53:30 +1000
To: Mike Carlton <smhcarlton@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Your 12-13 June Column

Dear Mr Carlton

I repeat my condemnation of the abusive emails you received. Not one of the organizations that advocate on behalf of the Jewish community and Israel would have had anything to do with these emails. Not one of them, to my knowledge, responded to your first article.

What I objected to was your lumping all comment that is critical of what you wrote about Israel into one amorphous bag. You presume – indeed you assert as a fact in your reply - that all the people who sent you abusive emails in response to your first article were (i) Jewish and (ii) acting in concert with one another and (iii) following some vast global plan. That is simply incorrect and it unjustly defames the legitimate representative organisations, which argue their case fairly and have a right to a fair hearing, including from journalists.

That is the only reason I emailed you. It is strange that you accuse me of trying to silence your criticisms of Israel, when I did not respond at all to your original article.

I appreciate the trouble you have taken to outline some of your views. My community has no quarrel at all with anyone for being concerned about the lives and welfare of civilians in Gaza, even if we differ about the fundamental causes of their present suffering and what needs to be done to alleviate it and bring about a just peace and a normalisation of the lives of Palestinians and Israelis.

Perhaps neither of us has given the other a proper hearing. I would like to discuss this matter with you other than in an exchange of emails. Would you be willing to meet?

Sincerely,

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