

## Activism classes: teachers lead students in ‘Allahu Akbar’ protest at Sydney school gate

By STEPHEN RICE

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Pro-Palestinian teachers have vowed to defy a crackdown ordered by the Minns government after they led dozens of schoolchildren in chants of “Allahu Akbar” (God is the greatest) outside a western Sydney public school on Wednesday.

Education Minister Prue Car had warned teachers at Granville Boys High School they must perform their duties “impartially” and “apolitically”, and told students they faced disciplinary action if they attended protests.

But activists from Teachers and School Staff for Palestine – who waved Palestinian and Lebanese flags and led children on chants through loudhailers – declared they would return to the school at 9am to continue the protest.

The act of defiance sets the scene for a confrontation that could spill into the election campaign of federal Education Minister Jason Clare, whose Blaxland electorate takes in the school.

Mr Clare, who is facing an anti-Labor onslaught by The Muslim Vote, was approached for comment on the protest but did not respond by deadline.

Ms Car said she expected there would be “a full school assembly tomorrow morning where those expectations will be reinforced to the entire student body”.

The protest came as tensions rose in the aftermath of police charging nurse Sarah Abu Lebdeh over an anti-Semitic video.

The protesters demanded the return to school of support officer [Sheik Wesam Charkawi](#), who was ordered by the NSW Education Department to work from home after defending the two nurses in an Instagram post.

[Ms Abu Lebdeh and her colleague Ahmad Rashad Nadir](#), who has not been charged, allegedly threatened to kill Israeli patients and refuse to treat them.

In his Instagram video, Sheik Charkawi said the nurses’ comments were “never meant to be literal or intended to be a threat to patient care” and criticised the “hypocrisy” of Anthony Albanese and NSW Health Minister Ryan Park for remaining silent “when confronted with the most egregious acts of violence committed by Israel”.

The [Muslim Vote](#) convener was ordered to take down the posts and work from home for allegedly breaching the department’s social media policy and code of ethics. Sheik Charkawi has since removed the video.

An Australian National Imams Council member, Sheik Charkawi came to public prominence after establishing The Muslim Vote campaign to take on Labor at the federal election.

On Wednesday, the ANIC declared it is “deeply concerned and disappointed by the targeting of Muslim and Pro-Palestinian professionals and staff and most recently one of its own member Imams”.

“Such actions set a dangerous precedent that threatens the principles of fairness, freedom of speech and democracy.”

A spokesperson for the NSW Department of Education said employees had “been reminded of their duty to uphold the reputation of the department as apolitical and impartial”.

“Any student who did not follow directions from staff will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action,” they said.

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies president David Ossip said: “These are incredibly troubling scenes. It is outrageous, scandalous and sad that children at a taxpayer-funded school were exploited as props at a divisive political rally.

“Serious questions need to be asked about how this was allowed to proceed. How were radicals allowed to stand outside the school gates and whip students into a fervour? How could any student or staff member who doesn’t share the views of the demonstrators feel safe in that environment?”

Strike Force Pearl detectives arrested Ms Abu Lebdeh after she attended Sutherland police station on Tuesday evening.

The former Bankstown Hospital nurse was captured on video earlier this month telling Israeli social media influencer Max Veifer: “One day, your time will come, and you will die the most horrible death.”

She and Mr Nadir, who also allegedly made threatening statements, were immediately sacked and [banned from practising as nurses](#). She was charged with three offences: threaten violence to group, use carriage service to threaten to kill, and use carriage service to menace/harass/offend.

Ms Abu Lebdeh is on strict bail conditions prohibiting her from going to a point of departure from Australia and banned from using social media.

Mr Nadir was admitted to hospital two weeks ago over concerns for his mental health and has not been charged.

NSW Police Commissioner Karen Webb said the charges were a major development in what had been a very thorough and exhaustive investigation by detectives attached to Strike Force Pearl.

“Strike Force Pearl detectives must be commended for acting swiftly under enormous pressure and public expectation,” she said.

“These charges have been laid following a lot of hard work and legal advice received yesterday from the commonwealth DPP.

“Detectives have overcome obstacles and jurisdictional challenges to get where we are today.

“This is the 14th arrest under Strike Force Pearl, with a total of 76 charges laid, which demonstrates the commitment of strike force detectives investigating these offences.”

Ms Abu Lebdeh’s family had previously said [the nurse was “sorry” and had suffered an “extreme panic attack”](#).

In the now-viral video, Ms Abu Lebdeh allegedly told the influencer: “It (Israel) is Palestine’s country, not your country, you piece of shit.”

She went on to say “when your time comes, I want you to remember my face so you can understand that you will die the most disgusting death”.

Asked what would happen if an Israeli patient came into the hospital, Ms Abu Lebdeh said: “I won’t treat them, I will kill them.”

Mr Nadir allegedly said that while Mr Veifer had “beautiful eyes”, he was going to “get killed” and go to “hell”. “Those pretty eyes should stay in this world for longer,” Mr Nadir said, who described himself in the footage as a “doctor”, which, given he was a nurse, may also constitute an offence.

Mr Veifer is a Hebrew-speaking English teacher who regularly posts videos to social media in which he has conversations on that site, particularly when he is matched with people that share anti-Israel and anti-Jewish views.

Ms Abu Lebdeh was granted conditional bail to appear at the Downing Centre Local Court on Wednesday, March 19.

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