

The 27 May 2021 Q&A episode breached the ABC's editorial police and code of conduct in four ways:

ABC POLICY: "Do not unduly favour one perspective over another"

The panel consisted of a Palestinian activist (Randa Abdel-Fattach) and a 'human rights lawyer' (Jennifer Robinson) who is actively involved in the Palestinian cause. It did not include anyone who is an Israel advocate or who speaks for the Australian Jewish community or its views on Israel.

The outcome of this panel imbalance was that the human rights abuses of Hamas (against Palestinians) and war crimes of Hamas (against Palestinians and Israelis) were not explored, and that easily-disproven libels against Israel went unchallenged.

While Dave Sharma is sympathetic to Israel, he represents a political party, not the Jewish or pro-Israel community. Further, he was balanced by Ed Husic, who represents a different political party, and who is sympathetic to the Palestinians.

While two questions were asked by people sympathetic to Israel, this cannot be considered balancing. Questions on Q&A spark conversation; the questioners are not involved in the conversation. They have very limited time to speak, whereas the panellists can speak at length.

The ZFA understands that Israeli diplomats or pro-Israeli people were invited to be in the audience and refused. This cannot be considered balance; if these Israeli representatives or pro-Israeli people were invited to be on the panel, that would be balance. Inviting people to be in the audience to ask a question, or suggesting that requesting people to ask a question provides balance is tokenistic.

A balanced panel would have seen Abdel-Fattach balanced by a representative of one of the mainstream pro-Israel Jewish organisations on the panel (not in the audience), and for Jennifer Robinson to either be excluded, or advertised as someone involved in the Palestinian cause (and balanced by a second non-politician that is active in Israel advocacy).

ABC POLICY: "Fair and honest dealing is essential to maintaining trust with audiences and with those who participate in or are otherwise directly affected by ABC content"

Jennifer Robinson is involved in the Palestinian cause. She represents Palestinians in the International Criminal Court. She cannot be considered an objective panellist, but someone who is biased toward the Palestinian position. Her remarks on the show proved that. However, her presence on the show was billed merely as a 'human rights lawyer'. Neither in her bio nor when she was introduced on the show was her role in the Palestinian cause raised. The ABC thus gave the impression that she is a neutral human rights specialist. That she came out so strongly against Israel in the show was unsurprising to anyone who knows her involvement in the Palestinian cause, but the average viewer would not have known her involvement, and would have been more convinced by a supposedly neutral human rights lawyer than Abdel-Fattah, who was at least billed as a Palestinian advocate.

When a Jewish person is pro-Israel, it is unsurprising. When a Palestinian person is pro-Palestine, it is unsurprising. But when a neutral person is pro- one side or the other, people will often take more notice of their

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views. That the ABC didn't reveal that she was an advocate for the Palestinian cause is an example of unfair and dishonest dealing.

ABC POLICY: "Those who create, acquire, commission or oversee ABC content are responsible for ensuring that it complies with the Editorial Policies"

By commissioning what was clearly going to be an imbalanced panel, and by not disclosing Robinson's involvement in the Palestinian cause, Q&A's producers were responsible for two obvious breaches in the ABC's editorial policies.

The views Abdel-Fattah and the involvement of Robinson are a matter of public record. Doing due diligence and background checks of panellists is surely a responsibility of the Q&A producers that commissioned these panellists.

The views of Abdel-Fattah, in particular, are well known, as they are frequently published (and she has appeared on Q&A previously). She advocates for a one-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. This is a view that is well outside the Palestinian consensus (e.g. a June 2021 poll among West Bank and Gazan Palestinians showed that 20% supported a one-state outcome - <http://pcpsr.org/en/node/843>). As such, not only was the panel imbalanced by not having a pro-Israel advocate on it, it was imbalanced by the choice of Palestinian panellist, who is extreme even by Palestinian standards.

ABC POLICY: "Present a diversity of perspectives so that, over time, no significant strand of thought or belief within the community is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented."

In the last five years, Q&A has not had an Israel advocate, nor anyone representing a mainstream Australian Jewish organisation, on the show. As such, a significant strand of thought within the community has been knowingly excluded.

The last time a Q&A episode was aired during ongoing Hamas-Israel violence (21/5/18), Abdel-Fattah was a panellist. As such, a strand of thought within the community has been disproportionately represented.

Q&A has included an Israeli voice in three shows over the last five years (as well as other Palestinian voices and people who are highly sympathetic to the Palestinian cause). The Israeli voices were two Israeli politicians (Tamar Zandberg, 25/11/19; Merav Michaeli, 11/9/17) and a journalist (Eldad Beck, 22/2/16). Two of these shows touched on Israeli-Palestinian relations, but a) the role of these politicians and journalist isn't to advocate for Israel (whereas Abdel-Fattah is an advocate for the Palestinian cause); the Israelis on the show provide an Israeli perspective, but they are not professional advocates and b) they weren't on the show during a period of violence, when interest in and emotions about the situation are concentrated.

The episode with Eldad Beck was an example of a balanced panel. It also included an academic from the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the ANU. The Israeli-Palestinian dispute wasn't discussed, but Israel was raised in another context; the journalist and the academic discussed the issue dispassionately, with nuance.