

'Syria hoax': Sydney University at centre of pro-Assad push

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Australian Academics Dare to Speak the Truth

One of Australia's most prestigious universities has become the centre of a movement that believes Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has been framed by the West for last week's chemical weapons attack.



Dr. Tim Anderson

The University of Sydney is standing by a controversial senior lecturer, Tim Anderson, who has dismissed the [sarin gas attack](#) in the Idlib Province as a "hoax" and called Syria's six-year civil war a "fiction" perpetrated by the US "to destroy an independent nation".

Fairfax Media can reveal Dr Anderson is just one among a number of Australian academics who have formed a pro-Assad outfit called the Centre for Counter Hegemonic Studies, based in Sydney, to counter "censorship" by their universities.

The centre was formed "after concern that many Western academic bodies constrain, censor and marginalise counter-hegemonic or anti-imperial research and discussion, due to their close ties with government and corporate sponsors".

As well as Dr Anderson, its editorial board consists of Luis Angosto-Ferrandez, another Sydney University senior lecturer, Drew Cottle from Western Sydney University, Rodrigo Acuna at Macquarie University and a number of other academics, including two from East Timor.

Next week the Centre will hold a two-day conference at the University of Sydney, including a discussion of the Syrian conflict "from Hezbollah's perspective". The event is endorsed by the University of Sydney Union-funded Political Economy Society.

An enthusiastic supporter of the Syrian state and lifetime radical, Dr Anderson was convicted in 1990 over the 1978 Hilton Hotel bombing in Sydney, but acquitted the following year. He has travelled to Syria several times to meet with Assad.

After his most recent pro-Assad tweets were reported by the ABC's Media Watch and News Corp's Daily Telegraph, Dr Anderson and his supporters labelled the reports "fake news" and launched extraordinary personal attacks on a journalist involved.

Jay Tharappel, who tutors human rights in the same Sydney University department as Dr Anderson, called News Corp journalist Kylar Loussikian "traitorous scum who desperately wants a second Armenian genocide". Loussikian is of Armenian background.

Mr Tharappel defended the remarks when contacted by Fairfax Media on Tuesday. "If people like him wage war on our post-colonial homeland then I will wage war against them," he said. "They can choose to fight me and I will fight them ... with words."

The University of Sydney said it was aware the CCHS was due to host next week's conference on campus, and noted it did not provide financial or administrative support to the centre.

Dr Anderson told Fairfax Media the CCHS had "zero budget" and its mission was to create a "virtual library" of literature in support of sovereignty and self-determination.

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A spokeswoman said the university did not endorse Dr Anderson's statements but was committed to free speech for academic staff in their area of expertise.

"This means tolerance of a wide range of views, even when the views expressed are unpopular or controversial," she said.

Dr Anderson has stated on Twitter that US presidents George Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump are the real "masterminds of Middle East terrorism". He stood by those comments on Tuesday. "Absolutely. The evidence is overwhelming," he said.

Dr Anderson has also written a book, *The Dirty War on Syria*, published by the Montreal-based Centre for Research on Globalisation. The centre has been dismissed by PolitiFact and the Associated Press as a website that promotes conspiracy theories.

Mr Trump last week authorised the US firing 59 Tomahawk missiles at the Syrian airfield from which he said the deadly chemical attack was launched. The Assad regime has denied responsibility, while ally Russia said the Syrian army hit rebel-owned chemicals on the ground.

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See also:

<http://jungledrum.hopto.org/news/story-1499.html>

<http://tinyurl.com/kalmn2d>

