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'Swastika is sacred, Nazi symbols are abhorrent': Hindu leaders urge language rethink

By ALEXI DEMETRIADI

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Australia's Hindu community is in an "impossible position" as anti-Semitic vandals defaced synagogues with swastikas, which are sacred in the Hindu faith; it has urged leaders instead to use "Nazi symbols" to describe the abhorrent vandalism.

The community's plea comes amid recent [anti-Semitic vandalism attacks targeting Sydney synagogues](#) as governments scramble to put a lid on the escalating crisis.

Hindu Council of Australia president Sai Paravastu said anti-Semites had put his community in a "crossfire" with their usage of the symbol, adding that while he firmly condemned recent attacks, he urged a change of language around its reporting.

"For Hindus, seeing 'swastika' in headlines associated with Nazi hate is not just upsetting, it is an affront to their faith and heritage," he said, asking political leaders, the media and educators to instead use the term "Nazi symbols".

"On one hand, (Hindus) must defend the sanctity of our symbol and educate others on its meaning. On the other, we are unfairly dragged into controversies we have no connection to, tarnishing our reputation among those who fail to understand the distinction."

In Hindu culture, the swastika is a sacred symbol of positivity and used extensively in religious ceremonies, festivals and daily life, often displayed to invoke blessings and

protection, and frequently used in ceremonial events.

The Hindu community has been one of the most steadfast supporters of its Jewish counterparts, with Mr Paravastu and the council's vice-president, Surinder Jain, recently [urging the government to better combat anti-Semitism](#).

“(Our) communities share a long history of mutual respect and support ... forged and rooted in understanding and empathy,” Mr Paravastu said.

He said his community's places of worship had been targeted, particularly with misinformation about Hindu symbols, and that the language tweak around “swastika” would have a long-lasting effect.

“This misrepresentation perpetuates ignorance, associating a spiritual symbol with the darkest chapters of human history,” he said, adding it risked painting Hindus as “somehow complicit with the ideologies of hate”.

“This is particularly harmful for those who use the swastika in their daily religious and cultural observances, as they often feel the need to defend the symbol against misconceptions.”

Mr Paravastu said it “went beyond a linguistic change” and instead would show a “commitment to cultural sensitivity and education”, asking for “empathy and openness” on the issue.

Mr Jain said the Hindu community was “horrified” by attacks targeting Jewish Australians, saying it was an affront to “Australia's entire multicultural fabric”.

He said the Nazi regime had “recruited” the swastika in an attempt to “justify their evil actions”, urging Australians to work together to make clear its usage in a Hindu setting was about positivity.

“(Our) communities have agreed together to distinguish an evil use of (the) swastika by addressing it as a ‘Nazi hate symbol’ or ‘Hakenkreuz’ (meaning ‘crooked cross’ in

German)," Mr Jain said.

"We understand a mere sight of a Nazi symbol (is) a shiver of terror for Jews, and Jews understand that the sacred swastika as used by Hindus is a symbol of peace. However, there is a need for wider education ... especially in the media, and by (people of different faiths)."

The request was backed by multi-faith leaders, including NSW Jewish Board of Deputies president David Ossip, who thanked the Hindu community for their "continued solidarity, friendship and moral clarity" toward Australian Jews.

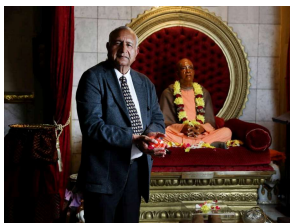
"We fully support the calls from the Hindu community to be careful about the nomenclature that is used to describe these symbols of hate," he said.

Faith NSW chief executive officer Murray Norman said the recent attacks targeting the Jewish community should be unequivocally condemned, but that it was important to not diminish another group while doing so.

"The Hindu community has wholeheartedly supported the Jewish community and answered their call in spades, but the way it (synagogues being vandalised with Nazi symbols) is being reported is causing harm," he said, urging federal and state leaders to prioritise education of Australia's faiths.

"By changing the (language) you're supporting one of Australia's largest faith communities."

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