

Australia: Protestors denounce police raids and anti-Muslim hysteria

Richard Phillips
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Over 300 people demonstrated in the south-west Sydney suburb of Lakemba last night over police brutality in so-called anti-terror raids on homes in Sydney and Brisbane earlier in the day. Some carried placards stating “Stop terrorising Muslims” and “Raids terrorise women and children.”

At the rally, organised by Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamist group, speakers said Muslims were being deliberately targeted by the government and the media, and denounced planned new anti-terror laws. Uthman Badar told the crowd that women and children had been terrorised by police during the raids.

“Muslims are as much concerned about security and peace as anyone else, but at the same time we are not fools,” Badar said, saying it was no coincidence that the raids occurred a few days before the Abbott government’s latest terrorism laws were to be introduced into parliament. “These are the same people who brought us children overboard and Iraq... They are creating fear and hysteria to justify the unjustifiable,” he said.

A teenage boy whose family home was raided said police wearing armour, helmets and balaclavas had smashed in their front door, ordered his mother to get out of bed and told her she could not put on a Muslim headscarf.

“I woke up to my mother screaming,” he said. “This pig, this man, tried to take the blanket off my mother when she was dressed like any woman would dress for her husband.” He said that police hit his mother and that he had been pushed around and handcuffed by police.

According to a Facebook posting by Maywand Osman, one of those initially detained, he raised his hands when confronted during one raid, but “four officers then jumped at me and one punched me in the

face. They threw me to the ground and started hitting me in the head and pulling my hair.”

Rebecca Kay, another speaker, condemned anti-Islamic fear-mongering being whipped up by the government and media. She said racist elements had subjected her to verbal abuse and death threats, including beheading. She denounced the anti-terror laws and warned, “Once these laws are passed everyone’s civil liberties are up for grabs.”

After the rally one of the demonstrators, Abu Yusra, told the WSWWS that the planned anti-terror laws were aimed at “silencing opposition to government intervention and aggression overseas—in Iraq and Afghanistan...”

“The government can use these laws against any citizen. That’s why we say it’s not just Muslims. Every responsible citizen of Australia should be afraid of these laws. Their rights are being violated using these laws. Everyone should be concerned and everyone should raise their voices about this so that the government can’t say it’s just the Muslims who are speaking out.”

The corporate media response to last night’s protest was aimed at silencing any criticism or opposition to the police operations or the anti-terror laws. Editorials in the Murdoch-owned Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and the *Australian* hailed the police raids and branded the protesters as “extremists.”

The *Daily Telegraph* specifically targeted the Lakemba protest organisers, describing them as “fringe Islamic identities” and fanatics with “dangerous voices who deserve to be even further marginalised.”

The *Australian* declared that the “fatuous protest did the Muslim community no favours among the wider population,” in effect blaming the protesters for the anti-Muslim xenophobia that the media has helped whip up.



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