

Australian police kill teenager amid anti-Muslim “terrorism” hysteria

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24 September 2014

Last night, at approximately 7.40 p.m., police shot and killed Abdul Numan Haider, an 18-year-old man of Afghan background, after he allegedly attacked two officers with a knife in front of a police station in Melbourne’s outer south east.

The teenager’s death is the first in the “anti-terrorism” operations taking place across Australia, accompanied by a media fear campaign about “terrorist cells” among the country’s Muslim population. According to at least one account, Haider was running away from the two police when he was shot.

Allegations filled the Australian and international media today that the teenager made “threats” against Prime Minister Tony Abbott, suggesting that he was planning some type of terrorist act. The banner headline of Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph*, which is in the forefront of fomenting anti-Muslim hysteria, declared “Cops Kill Fanatic.”

In statements that prejudice any investigation into the incident, Justice Minister Michael Keenan declared this morning that Haider was “a known terror suspect.” Australian Federal Police commander Bruce Giles fanned media speculation that the youth “may have” held up the black flag of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) at a shopping centre.

Victorian police later amplified the accusations against Haider, telling journalists he was carrying an ISIS flag and intended to “behead the officers, cover the bodies in the flag and then take photos to post via the internet.”

Whatever Haider’s alleged intentions, he was clearly not considered by police agencies to be an immediate danger to anyone, let alone the prime minister. He was not arrested or charged with any offence. He was asked to attend an interview at the Endeavour Hills police station with counter-terrorism officers over what Giles

stated was a “routine” matter. Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner Luke Cornelius told the media: “Our members had no inkling that this individual posed a threat to them.”

According to the police version of events, the youth complied with the interview request and voluntarily came to the station. He was met by an Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer and a senior Victorian state police officer. As they were shaking hands, police claim he produced a knife and attacked. The Victorian officer was stabbed in the arm, while the AFP officer was severely wounded in the face and chest.

Unnamed witnesses cited in today’s *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* said Haider was not attacking the police when he was shot. They reported he was running toward the station entrance, shouting “insults” about Abbott.

Before any inquiry even began into the use of lethal force by police, Abbott and his ministers explicitly endorsed the killing. Justice Minister Keenan declared “it is exactly this type of bravery and dedication shown by these officers that will continue to keep our communities safe and secure.” Abbott asserted that the incident “indicates there are people in our community who are capable of very extreme acts” and that “the police will be constantly vigilant to protect us against people who would do us harm.”

The young man has been branded a fanatical “lone-wolf” terrorist. No information has been published regarding his mental state or whether he was receiving medical treatment. Nothing is known about the circumstances of his family’s arrival in Australia from Afghanistan, or their conditions since then. Many Afghans endured severe war-related trauma, compounded by perilous voyages across the Indian Ocean and prolonged detention as so-called “illegal

refugees.” Once settled in Australia, many suffer entrenched poverty and systemic discrimination, including at the hands of the police.

Islamic Council of Victoria secretary Ghaith Krayem was among the few to make the obvious point that, without an investigation, “we don’t know really what happened when this young man arrived at the police station.”

Krayem told the Special Broadcasting Service the young man’s family was “struggling.” Narre Warren, the outer Melbourne suburb where they live, is a deprived working class area. It suffers high rates of unemployment, especially among immigrant youth.

Krayem confirmed that Haider was once involved with the conservative Islamist group Al-Furqan, but was not in recent contact with them. A bookshop operated by Al-Furqan and 11 homes in Melbourne’s south-eastern suburbs were raided by police in late 2012. Only one man was charged as a result of the operation—with possessing digital magazines that promoted Al Qaeda.

Haider was not among those targeted in 2012. Police reported only that he has been “a person of interest” for some time.

Police requests for “persons of interest” to attend interviews are essentially invitations that cannot be refused. Any refusal could be used to justify anything from greater surveillance to secret forced questioning by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). The teenager’s passport had already been revoked, most likely due to his past relationship with Al-Furqan.

The incident points to the sheer scale of the intrusive, intimidating and provocative operations being conducted by intelligence and police agencies on the pretext of suppressing domestic terrorist threats.

Last Thursday and Friday, dozens of homes were raided in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne on dubious claims that an Australian citizen fighting with ISIS in Syria phoned a young Sydney man and asked him to commit a random murder. This was inflated by the media into an ISIS conspiracy to behead someone and record the killing on video. Only one person, the 22-year-old who allegedly received the phone call, has been charged with a terrorist offence.

There is no information about many people, primarily young Muslims, who have been issued with such a

police interview request, or had their homes or workplaces visited by intelligence or police agencies. Nor is it known how many people have their communications and movements monitored on the grounds they are “persons of interest.”

The manufactured fear of imminent terrorist attacks is being deliberately heightened by major security mobilisations at public events and buildings to accustom the population to accept a heavy police presence.

In unprecedented scenes yesterday, police carrying military assault rifles were positioned outside the Australian parliament, purportedly in response to threats against Abbott and other politicians. The tens of thousands of fans who will attend the Australian Football League grand final in Melbourne on Saturday will confront armed police, police dogs, bag and body searches and video surveillance.

Predictably, last night’s police killing was immediately seized upon by the Abbott government and the media to insist on support for the so-called Foreign Fighters Bill, the second tranche of the government’s “anti-terrorism” legislation, which was released earlier in the evening. The draconian measures in the 160-page bill go beyond even the selected features that were leaked to the media over the weekend. They include wider powers to jail individuals or ban groups for “advocating” terrorism, and life sentences for assisting, preparing for or undertaking “an incursion” into a foreign country to engage in “hostile” or “subversive” activities.

The entire campaign over terrorism is based on shameless lies and distortions, aimed at providing the political and media establishment with the pretext for the deployment of Australian military forces to the Middle East to join the US-led war in Iraq and Syria and sweeping new police-state powers for the intelligence and police agencies.

This hysteria has now directly contributed to the police killing of an 18-year-old man.



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