

Australia: Workers condemn police killing of alleged “terrorist” Abdul Numan Haider

Our correspondents
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World Socialist Web Site correspondents again spoke with workers and young people in Melbourne over the weekend about last Thursday’s police killing of Abdul Numan Haider in the south-eastern suburb of Endeavour Hills. People were scathing of the media coverage and deeply concerned that Haider has been labelled a “lone wolf” terrorist in order to stampede the population into supporting Australia’s involvement in military operations in Iraq and Syria and attacks on democratic rights.

Haider was shot dead after he allegedly attacked two police officers with a knife in a car park adjacent the Endeavour Hills police station. Police had arranged to meet him after he called the station to protest over the fact his family’s house had been searched a few hours earlier without a warrant. He was reportedly already upset over being denied a passport on the grounds that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) believed he might have been considering travelling to Syria to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). His communications and activities were clearly being monitored by ASIO and the police.

Everything suggests that Haider was highly emotional and unstable due to the police pressure he was under. In an interview with the Special Broadcasting Service “Dateline” program, Nasir Andisha, the Afghan ambassador to Australia, described the youth as “disturbed and disillusioned” and someone who “needed more help, guidance, counselling, a helping hand.” Haider was the son of Afghan immigrants.

Haider was only 17-years-old, not 18 as the media reported. He would not have reached voting age until next February. He had ended his brief association with an Islamist grouping in Melbourne which, while holding extreme religious views, has publicly opposed violence and terrorism.

Ambassador Andisha explained that Haider came from a “very educated family” who “were doing very well” since migrating to Australia. He noted that the family were waiting for authorities to present the evidence regarding the weapon allegedly used by the boy to attack police, to see whether it was “a kitchen knife or something.” Andisha stated that the police made no attempt to inform the family that officers had shot and killed their son, which they found out from the television news.

The outrage among those who knew Haider and his family, and the broader anger over the boy’s death, was reflected at his funeral on Friday afternoon. The mosque where the service took place could not accommodate the hundreds of relatives, friends and supporters who rallied to mourn. Many people participated outside in the courtyard.

Dozens of police were deployed in surrounding streets. The Melbourne *Herald Sun* reported that “two plainclothes men—one of them armed—were wearing ear pieces and kept a close watch on who was attending.” Camera crews, not necessarily all from media outlets, filmed everyone entering and leaving the mosque.

Prime Minister, Tony Abbott continued to stoke fears, declaring on Saturday that he was “deeply concerned about the threat that ‘lone wolf’ terrorism poses to people.” To further condition the public to the increased public presence of the security apparatus, the Australian Football League’s Grand Final match on Saturday was the target of a massive police operation. The number of police deployed in and around the stadium was doubled; streets sealed off to vehicles; spectators were subjected to multiple searches; and undercover police were infiltrated throughout the crowd.

Workers and youth spoke with WSW

correspondents on Saturday in Dandenong, a suburb near where Numan Haider was killed, and in the western suburb of Footscray.

Safar, who is originally from Afghanistan, said: “I don’t know about the background, but I think they could have just arrested him. They didn’t have to kill him. They are using this to create hatred against Muslims. The media headlines just say ‘terrorist’ but we don’t know the real facts. I have checked Facebook and people are now commenting differently about Muslims. After this news, I heard of an Afghan family being bashed.”

Mohamed, a factory worker who migrated to Australia from Afghanistan, condemned the shooting: “Nobody deserves to be killed like that. I don’t know what the truth is. The media say anything. I’m angry that every time a Muslim does something wrong, they are labelled a terrorist. When Christians, or Jews, or Buddhists do something wrong, they are never called terrorists.

“I don’t like ISIS. They are cowards. They act as the police, the judge, and the executioner. But where did ISIS come from? Who made them? If you have cancer, you have to find out where it has come from to cure it. They were a small group, and now they’re massive and they have high-tech weapons. One hundred percent they have been supported by America, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE [United Arab Emirates].

“They are using ISIS as a reason to invade Syria, like they used WMD to invade Iraq, because Syria is the only country in the Middle East allied to Russia. It was the same thing in Afghanistan with Osama Bin Laden. They needed Osama Bin Laden to justify the war in Afghanistan. The whole war is about Russia and Iran, and controlling Syria. It is just like in Ukraine. We are heading for a war which is going to be big. I love the American people, but I am 100 percent against US foreign policy. What is happening in Iraq and Syria is affecting everybody.”

Fariha, a young supermarket worker in Footscray, said: “I don’t agree with the Victorian police shooting a boy. It shouldn’t be done so easily. They could have shot him somewhere not fatal. The media are also taking a part. They don’t go into what is the truth behind it. I’m not sure why it is happening, but I totally agree that it is an excuse for war.”

Emma, a Dandenong local, raised the possibility that

Haider may have been suffering mental health problems: “In America the police said a young man was attacking them, but he had mental issues. The guy who was killed here probably had mental issues. My partner has schizophrenia, and he got in trouble with the police very often.

“I work in the city and a lot of people come in there who have nowhere to go and who have problems. They need to go somewhere. I think it’s ridiculous. With the state of things at the moment I can’t imagine what it’s going to be like for my son. It is scary.”

Marcus, a hotel worker in Footscray, said: “They want to justify billions being spent on fighter jets. I get so angry. In my opinion unless you have 100 percent concrete proof that someone is about to do a terrorist act, you don’t have the right to brand them a terrorist. The current government is further and further into control and further and further into power. As for the role of the media, it makes me sick. It is trying to make us scared.”

A shopkeeper in Dandenong told WSWs correspondents: “What the guy [Haider] did was not the right way, but they shouldn’t have killed him. I saw him the day he came to the [Dandenong] Plaza. He was just walking around with an ISIS flag. There were 10 or 15 police. They held him and took photos of the flag, and asked him questions. They asked him what the meaning of the flag was, and he didn’t know. He was just a young innocent guy. There was obviously something wrong with him. I don’t trust what we are being told in the media. No-one knows exactly what the truth was. The police should have given him a chance to live, and now it is too late. I am very fearful of the police.”



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