

New Australian police “terror” raids used to ramp up crisis atmosphere

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9 May 2015

Heavily-armed Australian federal and state police conducted raids on homes in Melbourne and Sydney yesterday, reportedly detaining a 17-year-old boy in Melbourne and a 14-year-old in Sydney.

The police have provided virtually no information about arrests or alleged evidence involved. They claimed to have detonated three “suspected improvised explosive devices” discovered in one northern Melbourne house.

Nevertheless, headlines in this morning’s Murdoch media tabloids declared that police had foiled an “imminent terrorist plot,” supposedly timed for tomorrow, which is Mothers’ Day in Australia.

Murdoch’s *Australian* reported, “exclusively,” that the raids resulted from a tip-off by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the country’s domestic political spy agency.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott quickly seized on the raids to launch another terrorism scare campaign. “There is evidence of a bomb plot that was in a reasonably advanced state of preparation,” he declared today. His comments prejudiced any chance of a fair trial, as his similar remarks have done in other recent arrests.

Like previous such raids, these were conducted in a blaze of media coverage designed to whip up an atmosphere of crisis and danger. Television footage showed police in bomb-proof suits scouring through a targeted home, armoured vehicles cordoning off surrounding streets and scores of military-style Special Operations Group police carrying semi-automatic assault rifles.

A 300-metre exclusion zone was imposed and unspecified devices were reportedly exploded in a neighbourhood park, ensuring that local people heard what they described as sounds like muffled gunshots.

Government leaders were consulted in advance about the raids. According to the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*: “NSW [New South Wales] Premier Mike Baird was

briefed on the counter-terror operation on Thursday at a meeting with Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione and his deputy Cath Burn.”

It is not yet clear if there was any connection between the timing of the raids and the denial of bail yesterday to 18-year-old Melbourne teenager Harun Causevic. He was detained on April 18 in raids carried out to allegedly prevent a terrorist attack on the official April 25 celebrations of Anzac Day, marking the centenary of the disastrous British-led invasion of Turkey’s Gallipoli peninsula during World War I.

These raids form part of an escalating pattern of highly-publicised police swoops on homes in working-class areas since September, when more than 800 police conducted Australia’s largest-ever such operations, just before Abbott’s government announced the deployment of troops and war planes to join the latest US-led intervention in Iraq and Syria.

This morning, a 17-year-old detained yesterday was charged with the vague offences of “engaging in an act in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act ... and possessing things connected with a terrorist act.”

From what has been reported, the allegations seem to be as dubious and politically-motivated as those in the previous police operations, like the “Anzac Day plot” raids.

Alleged Facebook posts by the detained teenager were splashed across the pages of the Melbourne *Herald Sun*. No posting made any threats of terrorism. Instead, they voiced anger and anguish at the atrocities being committed by the US and its allies, including Australia, as well as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, throughout the Middle East.

“If you came home to somebody that used chemicals on your family, then slaughtered them and raped them and then burnt them alive, would you be still preaching ‘forgiveness’? one read. Another stated: “The ‘Muslims’

are quick to condemn the actions of the Islamic State [ISIS], but you will never see them condemning the US atrocities against Muslims, you will never see them condemning the crimes against Muslims in Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Iraq etc etc ...”

The publication of these posts suggests that the teenager has been targeted, at least partly, for his political views. In fact, under the latest barrage of “anti-terrorism” laws passed by the Abbott government, with the backing of the Labor Party, since September, expressions of opposition to the outrages being inflicted on the people of the Middle East in the US-led quest to dominate the resource-rich region could be prosecuted as “advocating” or “promoting” terrorism.

State governments have also exploited the atmosphere of crisis to issue directives that all police must be armed, wear bullet-proof vests and work in pairs.

In Melbourne yesterday, Magistrate Suzie Cameron rejected the bail application of 18-year-old Causevic, meaning that he will remain in a maximum security prison at least until August, when a committal hearing is due.

Police prosecutors declared that the teenager faced life imprisonment if convicted of “conspiring to prepare a terrorist act.” Australian Federal Police agent Denis Scott also cited Causevic’s supposed political views, accusing the teenager of being motivated by “an extreme ideology” and a “hatred and disdain” for authority in Australia.

Magistrate Cameron said that despite Causevic’s young age and lack of criminal history, she was not satisfied that “exceptional circumstances” existed to allow his release. The terrorism laws have reversed the centuries-old presumption in favour of bail. Defendants now must prove that unique extenuating factors make bail essential.

Lawyers for Causevic gave a string of reasons he should be released on bail, including that his family would offer a \$150,000 surety and he would undergo counselling with Islamic leaders.

But Cameron described Causevic’s behaviour, which allegedly included watching police and contacting weapons dealers, as “deeply concerning”—even though such activities are legal. The magistrate agreed that the teenager’s political opinions and/or mental health required imprisonment. “At worst, he has been radicalised, at best, he is psychologically or psychiatrically unwell,” she said.

Outside the court, Causevic’s father, Vehid Causevic, accused Prime Minister Abbott of instigating a political witch hunt. He said Abbott’s “message” was that “whatever young Muslims who [are] going five times per

day in mosque will be charged like terrorists.” He insisted that his son had done nothing wrong, and if anyone could prove otherwise, “I’ll go in jail for all my life.”

Causevic said he and his son had been the victims of terrorism by Victoria Police officers who broke into his home on April 18, dragged people out of bed and physically assaulted his son, breaking his arm. Abbott and Victorian Labor Premier Daniel Andrews utilised the April 18 raids to foment fears of terrorism and drum up support for the Anzac Day war celebrations.

Incredibly, according to the police, the so-called Anzac Day plot was the brainchild of a 14-year-old British boy, who allegedly spoke online to another Melbourne teenager, Sevdet Besim, 18, about “taking out some cops.”

Both Besim, who is also charged with “conspiring” to commit a terrorist act, and the unnamed boy, from northwest England, have been denied bail as well. The 14-year-old is the youngest ever charged with a terrorism offence in Britain, and will reportedly be placed on trial as an adult.

Police conceded that Harun Causevic did not even know of the allegedly incriminating conversation. The main link alleged between him and Besim is that they were friends of Numan Haider, another 18-year-old from the same area of southwestern Melbourne, who was shot dead by police last September in dubious circumstances.

Yesterday’s raids again demonstrate the connection between war and the assault on fundamental legal and democratic rights. Like the massive national police mobilisation during last December’s Sydney café siege, which involved a sole deranged hostage-taker, all these police operations have been used to justify the dispatch of more troops to join the US-led war in the Middle East and the introduction of further police state-style “counter-terrorism” laws.



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