

Australian “Anzac Day terror plot” charge dropped

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A revealing light was shed on the Abbott government’s constant resort to terrorist scare campaigns when the federal director of public prosecutions (DPP) this week dropped the sole “terrorism” charge against a Melbourne teenager accused in April of plotting an attack on Anzac Day war ceremonies. According to the DPP’s statement, there was “insufficient evidence” to continue the prosecution.

Harun Causevic, 18, from Hampton Park, a working class suburb in outer-southeastern Melbourne, was finally released on bail. Despite protests by his family, he was kept in a maximum-security prison for more than four months, held in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day.

Causevic and four other teenagers were arrested in a series of violent pre-dawn police raids on April 18, supposedly for planning to behead a police officer, take his gun and go on a shooting rampage on the 100th anniversary of Australia’s involvement in the World War I, British-led invasion of Turkey’s Gallipoli peninsula.

Planned by successive governments for years, the official Anzac Day centenary events were intended to be the highpoint of a four-year multi-million dollar campaign to “celebrate” World War I and condition public opinion for a new period of war.

The alleged “Anzac Day plot” was the subject of lurid headlines throughout the corporate media, fed by police claims that the “plot” was “ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria]-inspired.” Prime Minister Tony Abbott, Labor Party leader Bill Shorten and Daniel Andrews, the Labor premier of the state of Victoria, seized upon the arrests to whip up support for the nationalist and militarist displays on Anzac Day and to justify a heavy police mobilisation for the events.

“This was a potential attack at an advanced stage of planning,” Abbott declared immediately. He urged people to defiantly “turn up in very large numbers at Anzac events ... to support our values, our interests, our armed forces.” Shorten called on people to demonstrate that “we will not be deterred by a fear of terrorism.” Andrews demonised the five teenagers as “simply evil, plain and simple.”

Typifying the media hysteria, the *Melbourne Age* reported that the alleged attack would have been “shockingly similar” to the 2013 murder of British soldier Lee Rigby in London. “The alleged plotters had discussed opening fire at one or more Anzac Day events in southeast Melbourne suburbs,” the Fairfax Media newspaper reported, citing police sources.

Now, it seems, there is “insufficient evidence” to even prosecute one of the key accused “plotters.”

Causevic was facing possible life imprisonment under Australia’s draconian post-2001 “counter-terrorism” laws, on one vague charge of “conspiring to do an act in preparation or planning for a terrorist act.”

Before being charged, he was detained without trial under a Preventative Detention Order. He became the first person in the state of Victoria to be imprisoned under such an order, for which the police only need to assert a “reasonable suspicion” that a person could commit an “imminent” terrorist act.

Causevic has been granted bail after agreeing to plead guilty to relatively minor weapons charges—the possession of two knives and some knuckle dusters. The maximum penalty is two years’ jail, but his lawyers told a Melbourne magistrate that he should be given a good behaviour bond.

Of the five Melbourne teenagers arrested, only one, Sevdet Besim, 18, remains accused of participating in the “conspiracy” to prepare a terrorist act. The basis for

this charge appears to be police allegations that Besim had social media communications with a British boy, now aged 15.

The British boy last month pleaded guilty in England to “incitement” of terrorism, after supposedly encouraging Besim, via the Internet, to “get your first taste of beheading.” Besim’s trial will not commence for many months. Last week, he appeared in court via a prison video link and was told that he would remain behind bars until a two-day committal hearing in December.

Two of the five arrested Melbourne teenagers were quickly released without charge. Another, Mehran Azami, 19, was never charged with a terrorist offence, but later pleaded guilty to importing weapons, such as knives and knuckle-dusters, and is in prison awaiting a sentencing hearing.

Despite the collapse of the case against Causevic, both Premier Andrews and the Victoria Police this week stridently defended the April raids, in which about 200 para-military police smashed their way into homes, battered down doors, broke windows and physically attacked and injured the teenagers and some family members.

“When police have a reasonable belief that they need to take steps to keep the community safe, then that’s exactly what they do,” Andrews declared. The police stated: “The AFP [Australian Federal Police] and Victoria Police have repeatedly said that the current counter-terrorism environment dictates that police will always act in the interest of ensuring community safety.”

These statements can be taken as a warning that similar methods will be unleashed again. Over the past 12 months an intensifying pattern has emerged of major police raids and operations that appear to be politically timed, in order to justify the Abbott government’s barrage of draconian new “counter-terrorism” laws and the dispatch of more Australian forces to join the predatory US-led war in Iraq and Syria.

These operations also serve as a distraction from the worsening economic conditions, including rising unemployment, and the government’s mounting political crisis, produced by its failure to impose the deep cuts to social spending and working conditions demanded by the corporate elite.

April’s raids ramped-up an atmosphere of fear-

mongering fuelled by huge police raids in Sydney and Melbourne last September, followed days later by the police killing of Abdul Haider, another 18-year-old from southeast Melbourne. Above all, last December’s Sydney café siege, which involved a sole deranged hostage-taker, Man Haron Monis, was turned into a national “terrorist” incident by the federal and state governments.

Now, a year on from last September’s raids, the Abbott government is anxious to again foment terrorism scares, just as it prepares to announce that it will extend the Australian air force bombing operations from Iraq to Syria, thus joining the illegal US-led operation to oust the Assad regime. Under the guise of combatting terrorism, the government is also trying to push legislation through parliament to allow the immigration minister, by arbitrary decree, to strip Australian citizenship from targeted individuals.

Facing a sharp economic downturn and the emergence of opposition in the working class to the ongoing assault on jobs and conditions, the Abbott government is preparing to ramp up its militarist agenda. *Australian Financial Review* political editor Laura Tingle reported two weeks ago that the cabinet National Security committee “recently asked for a list of national-security-related things that could be announced weekly” in the lead-up to next year’s scheduled federal election.

This program of war abroad, accompanied by police-state measures at home, has the unconditional support of the Labor Party. It is just as committed as the Liberal-National government to backing US militarism and seeking to divert the rising domestic class tensions.



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