

Police target Muslim youth after alleged “terror” shooting in Sydney

Linda Levin
7 October 2015

The ongoing campaign of vilification and harassment of Sydney’s Muslim population has escalated in the wake of last Friday’s tragic shooting death of a 58-year-old man by Farhad Jabar, a 15-year-old Muslim schoolboy who was subsequently gunned down by police.

This morning, more than 200 police launched a series of coordinated “counter-terrorism” raids across four western Sydney suburbs, accompanied by live television coverage timed for the breakfast news programs. While local residents threw eggs at journalists filming the events in one of the suburbs, police arrested five people between the ages of 16 and 24, one of them a schoolmate of Jabar. Three of the homes raided had been subjected to a similar “counter-terror” operation in September last year.

Farhad Jabar, the son of Iraqi Kurdish refugees who arrived in Australia 15 years ago, shot Curtis Cheng, a civilian police accountant, outside NSW Police headquarters in Parramatta, in Sydney’s western suburbs, just metres from his school, the Arthur Phillip High School. Special constables immediately shot and killed the teenager, admitting they had no intention of just injuring him.

Despite the lack of credible evidence, the government, police, and media declared Jabar’s deeply disoriented action a “terrorist attack,” attempting to link it to local mosques and Islamic organisations while combing social media, targeting the boy’s school friends, acquaintances and other youth for evidence of collusion.

The basis for the latest police raids was laid by yesterday’s banner headline in Murdoch’s tabloid *Daily Telegraph*, “Police believe gunman was no lone wolf but part of extremist pack.” On the same day, Jabar’s Year 10 schoolmates were subjected to police

questioning in the school’s library and a 17-year-old student was surrounded by four heavily armed officers as he was walking to school, because of comments he had posted on social media. After hours of questioning, the youth was subsequently arrested, and charged with assaulting and intimidating police, two counts of resisting arrest and using a carriage to menace, harass and offend. His family home in Guildford was raided yesterday evening.

The student’s Facebook postings, made last Friday, the day of the shootings, made no mention of Islam, but expressed deep hostility to the police. One said that Merrylands (one of the areas raided) police station “is next, hope they all burn in hell.” On Saturday, he posted a photo of himself with the comment: “No justice, no peace, f**k the police.”

A Sunni-based Islamic group, which police alleged was linked to Jabar, declared on Monday that such allegations were “so groundless and absurd, they deserve naught but derision.” The statement by Hizb ut-Tahrir, which organised a demonstration last Sunday against the US and Russian bombing of Syria, went on to say that while “actions like the Parramatta shooting are plainly wrong,” the “real cause of violence is western foreign and domestic policy.” It went on to predict, “No doubt government authorities will milk this shooting to justify further insidious intervention in the Muslim community and further policing of Muslim youth,” a prediction that was rapidly confirmed.

While the political opposition of the WSW to Hizb ut-Tahrir and other Islamic fundamentalist organisations is well known and documented, these comments point to important factors motivating a 15-year-old boy to carry out such a terrible act.

According to the received wisdom, handed down by academic “terrorism” experts, government authorities

and, above all, the intelligence agencies and police, the cause of all anti-social and disoriented behaviour, particularly when it involves violence, carried out by Muslim youth and/or those of Middle-Eastern origin, is “extremist radicalization.”

At a community forum held in Bexley, in Sydney’s south-west, last week to discuss “violent extremism,” the head of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) Duncan Lewis warned, for example, that teenagers were being radicalised much more quickly and at younger ages than ever before.

“Radicalisation appears to be very rapid, almost inexplicably so.”

In reality, radicalization, which, in the majority of cases, is another word for a rapidly growing sense of alienation from and opposition to the current social order among many millions of youth in Australia and internationally, is not “inexplicable” at all.

All the sanctimonious speeches from Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Labor Opposition Leader Bill Shorten about the need for “inclusiveness,” “community co-operation” and, as yesterday’s editorial in the *Australian* put it, “to foster closer relations and deep trust between Muslim communities and law enforcement agencies,” cannot hide the fact that today’s working class youth, Muslim or otherwise, face a likely future of unemployment, financial insecurity, lack of a decent education, no possibility of owning or even renting their own home, and little or no access to culture and entertainment. Official youth unemployment stands at 13.5 percent. In Parramatta it is over 18 percent. The sense of worthlessness accompanying these levels of mass unemployment has been expressed in several recent studies, demonstrating that the rate of anxiety and depression among young people in Australia is rising.

At the same time, unrelenting police harassment—on public transport, around their schools, in local shopping centres, at sporting events, in the city—dogs many young people from Sydney’s west wherever they go. Since 9/11, under the rubric of the fraudulent “war on terror,” an unprecedented buildup of the repressive apparatus of the state has taken place, including multiple rounds of “anti-terror” legislation devoted to tearing up fundamental democratic rights and aimed at suppressing social dissent, especially among youth.

Moreover, any teenager today has grown up under

conditions of permanent violence, militarism and war. Since Farhad Jabar, for example, was born, one Middle Eastern country after another has been bombed, its infrastructure destroyed and its population killed or displaced. Every evening, television news is dominated by images of millions of traumatised refugees facing barbed wire fences, tear gas, and armed police all aimed at preventing them from finding a place to live. What impact does that have on young people?

The turn by some youth to extremist Islamist ideology and, in a handful of cases, to acts of individual terror, stems from desperation and the absence of any progressive alternative within the current political set-up to the social crisis they confront.

In an interview on Monday with the *Australian*, a well-known and longstanding youth worker in western Sydney, Father Riley, spoke about his experiences with Muslim youth in the area. “These kids have lost any sense of belonging to anyone, and therefore they are extremely vulnerable. They have such a sense of hopelessness that they will go anywhere that says they will have them.”

Farhad Jabar was described by school friends as a “quiet” boy, who regularly played basketball at school. Police who trawled his Facebook and twitter accounts apparently found only that, until 2013, he liked The Simpsons, Ricky Martin, Delta Goodrem, Hugh Jackman and other Australian singers.

Whatever the 15-year-old’s immediate motivation for such a destructive, tragic and brutal action as the killing of Curtis Cheng, it was, in the final analysis, the product of deep and profoundly troubling social causes.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact