

# The New Zealand terrorist attack and the international danger of fascism

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The death toll from last Friday's fascist terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand was revised upward to 50 over the weekend. The youngest person killed was a three-year-old boy. Thirty-four people remained in hospital on Sunday, with 12 in a critical condition, including a severely injured four-year-old girl.

People throughout the world are horrified by the cold-blooded, racist massacre, which targeted defenceless Muslim men, women and children while they were praying. Tens of thousands of people joined vigils over the weekend in New Zealand and internationally to show solidarity with the victims and their families and to defend Muslims, immigrants and refugees.

New Zealand police are now saying that Australian-born, 28-year-old Brenton Tarrant was the only gunman and had no assistance from others. He has appeared in court on murder charges. Authorities in both New Zealand and Australia claim that he at no time came to the attention of either the intelligence agencies or the police, and was therefore not under any form of monitoring.

This attempt to portray Tarrant as a disturbed "lone wolf," and especially the claim that he was "off the radar," is simply not credible. The 74-page manifesto issued by Tarrant makes clear that he prepared and carried out the terrorist atrocity on behalf of an international network of fascists and white supremacists, with whom he had openly collaborated for several years.

Tarrant's manifesto is a modern-day *Mein Kampf*. It combines calls for genocidal violence and civil war to force non-European "invaders" from Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand—including all people of Muslim, Jewish, African, Asian and Roma background—with pathological hatred of socialism. It is steeped in the white racist and ultra-nationalist nostrums of "blood and soil" that animated Nazism and other fascist movements in the 1920s and 1930s.

The gunman wrote that he had "donated to many nationalist groups and... interacted with many more." Since 2012, he has visited Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, France, the UK, Spain, Turkey, Pakistan and even

North Korea, as well as returning to Australia and traveling to New Zealand.

He claims he decided to turn to terrorism during a two-month tour of Europe in 2017 and following the defeat of the far-right National Front in the French election. Tarrant contacted the so-called Knights Templar, an organisation allegedly linked to Norwegian fascist mass murderer Anders Breivik, and asserts that he received its "blessing" for the Christchurch attack. He was active on ultra-right social media and blogs and joined a gun club not long after arriving in New Zealand. He declared that he chose New Zealand as the country to stage his attack in order to demonstrate that "nowhere in the world was safe" for "non-whites."

If all of this did go "under the radar" of security agencies around the world, Tarrant's manifesto provides one explanation as to how. He boasted that fascist groups are deeply integrated into the state apparatus, the military and the police. He wrote: "The total number of people in these organisations is in the millions... but *disproportionately employed in military services and law enforcement*. Unsurprisingly ethno-nationalists and nationalists seek employment in areas that serve their nations and community." [Emphasis added]. Tarrant estimated that "hundreds of thousands" of European soldiers and police belong to "nationalist groups."

The Christchurch attack—and the conceptions that inspired it—must be taken as a deadly warning by the international working class and progressive sections of the middle class. It is the product of the deliberate cultivation, at the highest levels of the capitalist state in country after country, of the most extreme right-wing nationalism. As the working class internationally comes forward in a mass, resurgence of class struggle against unprecedented levels of social inequality and the danger of war, the ruling class is once again, as it did in the 1920s and 1930s, seeking to use fascist forces to divide, intimidate and suppress the opposition to the bankruptcy of capitalism and the nation-state system.

Political parties and individuals espousing views that are not far from those of Brenton Tarrant can be found in the

governments and parliaments of every European country, in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and in the US Congress and White House.

In Germany, Merkel's coalition government has adopted the policies of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), which sits on the opposition benches of the German parliament. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer lined up behind a neo-Nazi demonstration in Chemnitz last September, saying he would have marched alongside the fascists if he had not been a minister. The then-president of the German secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen, likewise defended the Chemnitz mob and denied its blatant anti-immigrant and fascist character.

A secret right-wing terrorist network has been exposed within the German armed forces, with hundreds of members. The network, whose members have been protected by the judicial system, had detailed plans to murder prominent figures in the government and attack Jewish and Muslim organisations.

In the US, both the Democrats and Republicans have sought to scapegoat immigrants for the social crisis in America. They both use racial politics in an effort to divide the working class.

President Trump, whom Tarrant described as "a symbol of renewed white identity," has sought to nurture a fascist constituency. In a message of solidarity to his fascist base, Trump told reporters after the Christchurch attack that he did not consider "white nationalism" a threat. Two days before the New Zealand massacre, he made a clear threat to mobilise his supporters in the military, police and thuggish groups like "Bikers for Trump" against his opponents, telling *Breitbart News* that they were "tougher" than the "left."

This followed the arrest in February of fascist US Coast Guard officer and Trump supporter Christopher Paul Hasson, who planned to kill prominent African-American and Jewish individuals and members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

In the weeks leading up to the Christchurch attack, a campaign of slander was unleashed against left-wing critics of the Israeli government's brutal treatment of Palestinians. Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar, a Muslim, was branded an "anti-Semite" for pointing to the influence wielded by the pro-Zionist lobby over both parties. This campaign echoes the witch-hunt accusing UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and hundreds of Labour members of "anti-Semitism," which is aimed at delegitimising and purging left-wing opposition to British imperialism.

In Australia and New Zealand, where politicians are making hypocritical statements condemning racism and violence, the establishment has, since 2001, demonised

Muslim refugees as a threat and potential terrorist fifth column, and blamed immigration for every social problem.

The New Zealand First Party, which controls the ministerial portfolios of defence and foreign affairs in the Labour Party-led coalition government, has repeatedly demanded measures to stop "mass immigration" from Muslim and Asian countries—using language not very different from that used by Tarrant and other right-wing extremists.

The barbaric attack in Christchurch underscores the warning made by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in its January 3, 2019 statement: The Strategy of the International Working Class and the Political Fight Against Capitalist Reaction in 2019. While fascism is not yet a mass movement, it is receiving support from sections of the ruling class, the state and the establishment media.

Extreme right-wing organisations, the statement noted, have been allowed to "exploit demagogically the frustration and anger felt by the broad mass of the population." It stressed: "All historical experience—and, in particular, the events of the 1930s—demonstrates that the fight against fascism can be developed only on the basis of the independent mobilization of the working class against capitalism."

The ICFI has spearheaded the struggle to bring the crucial lessons of history to bear in the struggle against the promotion of fascist forces in Germany, across Europe and internationally.

This fight is at the centre of the election campaign by its European sections and a series of public meetings across the United States titled "The Threat of Fascism and How to Fight It." The meetings will be addressed by Christoph Vandreier, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party in Germany and author of the book *Why Are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany*.

The ICFI must be built as the leadership of a unified, international and socialist working class movement capable of preventing the horror of fascism from overtaking society on an even greater scale than in the 1920s, '30s and '40s.



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