

# New Zealand government bans fascist terrorist Brenton Tarrant's manifesto

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The manifesto by Australian fascist Brenton Tarrant, who killed 50 people and injured the same number in shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, has been officially suppressed in New Zealand.

On March 23 the country's chief censor David Shanks announced that the 74-page document titled "The Great Replacement" has been deemed "objectionable" under the Films, Video and Publications Classification Act. Shanks instructed anyone in New Zealand who downloaded or printed off the manifesto, which Tarrant posted online just before the March 15 attack, to destroy it. Possession of the manifesto carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years and anyone who shares it can be jailed for 14 years. For now, the document can still be accessed and read legally in other countries, including Australia, but the New Zealand decision sets a dangerous precedent.

The suppression of the document is a major attack on democratic rights. The ban is a highly political decision: it is part of the efforts by the government and the ruling elite to suppress public discussion about the roots of the terrorist attack, and especially to cover up the role of the state and political parties, in New Zealand and internationally, in creating the conditions for the development of fascism.

It is not the internet and the social media that have created an audience for fascist ideology and spurred acts of violence, but the systematic whipping up of anti-immigrant xenophobia by governments for decades, in particular the vilification of Muslims as part of the bogus US-led war on terror.

The ban is intended to prevent discussion of the fact that many of Tarrant's views are not very different from those held in governments and parliaments throughout the world. The manifesto contains anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric strikingly similar to that

used by US President Donald Trump, who Tarrant hails as a "symbol of white renewal." Tarrant repeatedly describes immigrants as "invaders," the same word Trump used to incite violence against refugees. Tarrant's anti-Islamic rant also resembles the political rhetoric of far-right parties across Europe, as well as Australia's One Nation and the New Zealand First Party, which is part of the Labour-led government in Wellington.

Like Tarrant, NZ First leader Winston Peters has sought to whip up anxiety about the "replacement" of New Zealanders by immigrants, especially Muslims and Asians.

The ban will pave the way for the New Zealand state to suppress other political publications, especially left-wing and Marxist publications, which were heavily censored in World War I and World War II. As the world economic crisis accelerates and New Zealand aligns ever more closely with US threats against Russia and China, the Christchurch massacre has been seized on to justify censorship.

Following the terrorist attack, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern denounced "extremism of every kind," while Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison called for a crackdown on "extremism of the right and of the left." Demands are being made for "extreme" content to be removed from Facebook, which has already censored the *World Socialist Web Site* and many left-wing sites.

Far from stopping the manifesto's circulation among its intended audience, the ban will only increase its appeal in white supremacist circles internationally. Shanks admitted to TVNZ that his decision would give the document "cachet and attraction" among such layers.

The legality of the ban is not at all clear. New

Zealand has no specific law against “hate speech” and books such as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* can be distributed. The Bill of Rights Act (1990) states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form.” These rights are “subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.”

According to the Classification Act, a publication can be classified as objectionable and effectively banned “if it... deals with matters such as sex, horror, crime, cruelty, or violence in such a manner that the availability of the publication is likely to be injurious to the public good.” The decision is at the discretion of the Chief Censor and his staff.

Justifying his ban, Shanks said that in addition to espousing hateful ideology Tarrant’s manifesto was “terrorist promotional material” that exhorted others to acts of violence against specific groups and individuals. Speaking to TVNZ, Shanks dismissed arguments that the public should have the right to access the manifesto to help understand New Zealand’s worst terrorist atrocity. “This is a very poor place to go to try and understand what happened,” he said.

Journalists and researchers who want to study the document must apply to the Classifications Office for an “exemption” to access it for a limited time, determined by the censor. In a threatening press release, Shanks said the “use of excerpts in media reports may not in itself amount to a breach of the [Act], but ethical considerations will certainly apply. Real care needs to be taken around reporting on this publication, given that widespread media reporting... was clearly what the author was banking on, in order to spread their message.” This statement is meant to intimidate anyone wishing to report on the contents of the manifesto and to smear them as assisting the far-right terrorist.

A spokesman for New Zealand’s Free Speech Coalition, lawyer Stephen Franks, denounced the ban as “a completely improper use of the censorship powers.” It called for “each citizen” to be allowed “to engage, hear, read, and reject evil for themselves.” A few journalists have also objected to the ban. The Green Party, which is part of the coalition government, has remained silent, as have the pseudo-left organisations.

Most media commentators praised Shanks’ decision. An editorial in the Christchurch *Press* rejected the argument that the ban “stifles debate about the gunman, his motives and how future bad actors can be stopped.” It declared: “The debate is not worse because we can no longer possess or distribute the document. Its contents are well enough understood by the public.”

This is completely false. In fact, the media has played a major role in covering up the significance of the manifesto. The document, for example, makes clear that Tarrant is a highly-conscious fascist, sympathetic to certain far-right politicians and with international connections to many nationalist groups. He is not a “lone wolf,” as is asserted by the government and much of the media.

The manifesto also reveals Tarrant’s sympathy for the military and police and states that hundreds of thousands of people in the European armed forces are in nationalist groups. This passage, which raises extremely serious questions about whether Tarrant had any assistance from members of these state agencies, has received no attention in the New Zealand or Australian media. Fascist groups have been allowed to flourish in both countries unhindered by police and intelligence agencies, which ignored repeated warnings of neo-Nazi violence in the years leading up to Tarrant’s attack.

There has been complete silence in the media about Tarrant’s threats against Marxists and communists, which underscore that fascism is a tool used by the bourgeoisie to crush the working class, especially its most conscious, socialist elements. The suppression of the manifesto is intended to cover up the fact that, although fascism is not yet a mass movement, as workers and young people come into struggle against austerity and war, the capitalist class will increasingly turn to fascist forces in an attempt to defend its rule.



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