

No evidence of “gas the Jews” chant at Sydney Opera House

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In the days after the Hamas military operation of October 7, imperialist governments signalled their support for Israel’s barbaric leveling of Gaza, which continues more than two months later. From the earliest stages, governments, together with the press, sought to conflate opposition to the Zionist regime with antisemitism.

An important role was played by footage of a protest at the Sydney Opera House on October 9. The video purported to show a crowd chanting “gas the Jews” outside the landmark, which had been lit up with the Israeli flag.

The footage not only went viral on social media. It was reported by all the major Australian publications and many international outlets. The chant was referenced by supporters of Israel as an exemplar of a supposed wave of global antisemitism that has erupted since October.

In Australia, and to an extent globally, the chant was used by governments as evidence that protests opposing the genocide in Gaza were a threat to “public safety,” requiring aggressive policing, if not outright bans.

However, persistent questions over the footage have come to the surface.

An investigative report by *Crikey* last week revealed that “police and independent fact-checkers have been unable to verify whether the chants happened.” No charges have been laid related to the chant, which *Crikey* noted may have met the criminal threshold for threatening or inciting violence.

The most damning passages of the report stated: “Barrister Mahmud Hawila, who has represented pro-Palestine protest organisers, shared minutes with *Crikey* from a meeting with deputy commissioner Mal Lanyon that took place on November 21 that show Lanyon saying NSW Police had ‘no evidence that those words were said.’”

The footage was originally posted to social media by the Australian Jewish Association (AJA). It consisted of two clips, one 25 seconds long, the other less than a minute labelled: “UNCUT VERSION—SHOCKING ‘Gas The Jews’ on the steps of the Sydney Opera House.”

But, as per *Crikey*: “Analysis of the AJA videos by verification experts at RMIT CrossCheck found a number of

signs that suggest audio was edited. This review seen by *Crikey* notes that the audio is often out of sync with the video, that a section of audio was repeated during a clip, and that some audio was repeated while different clips were being shown. These suggest that additional editing was done beyond splicing different video clips together.”

Crikey continued: “RMIT CrossCheck’s analysis by itself does not confirm or debunk whether the chant was heard during the rally. However, it does cast doubt on the AJA video’s credibility as the sole source of these claims. The report suggests that verifying whether the chants happened would require obtaining the original footage, locating other footage or obtaining eyewitness accounts—none of which has happened to *Crikey*’s knowledge.”

According to *Crikey*, representatives of the AJA refused to answer its questions prior to publication, with one claiming that he was busy and another asking, “Why would we tell you where we got that footage from?”

Since publication, the AJA X/Twitter account has asserted that *Crikey* and its reporters support “Hamas and its atrocities. Nobody mistakes these guys for journalists.”

The AJA also shared a *Sky News* report on December 14, containing new footage from the October 9 protest. The right-wing Murdoch outlet and the AJA claim that the video confirms the original footage posted two months ago.

The new footage appears to be uncut. When chanting occurs, it is captioned “gas the Jews.” There is no indication that the audio has been subjected to independent analysis. To this writer, and many who have commented on X/Twitter, it sounds as though some protesters are chanting “Where are the Jews?”

From attendees it appears clear that that chant was made, along with “F.k the Jews.” Immediately after the protest, rally organisers from the Sydney Palestine Action Group put out a statement condemning the antisemitic chants. They explained that their protest, after it had marched from Sydney Town Hall to the Opera House, had briefly been gatecrashed by a small and unrelated group. The organisers had told them to go away, and condemned their slogans as

despicable.

The identity of those who attempted to hijack the protest remains unknown. It is possible from eyewitness reports that some were backward teenagers, scarcely adults.

The incident, however, occurred under conditions where governments and the media had deliberately whipped-up a highly charged atmosphere, conducive to provocations.

The decision to light the Opera House sails in the colors of the Israeli flag was itself a provocation, unilaterally undertaken by the NSW Labor government of Premier Chris Minns. One of the main national landmarks was transformed into a sort of shrine to the Zionist regime, as it was already bombarding civilians in Gaza.

Then, before any objectionable slogans had been made, senior ministers in the Minns government declared that no protests should occur, and vilified those who would take part. They were joined by Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

On November 30, NSW Labor MP Stephen Lawrence reportedly told a sitting of the state parliament that “real questions have since emerged as to whether that particular chant was said.” He added, “It seems that questions have been raised about the veracity of the video,” and noted the growing ability to manipulate video and audio, including through the use of Artificial Intelligence.

In response, Minns gave an exclusive interview to the virulently pro-Israel *Australian Jewish News*. While rebuking Lawrence, Minns dodged the issue he had raised, stating: “I’m not going to endorse these views or these comments. I’ll let police conduct their investigation however it certainly sounds like a despicable and racist chant to me.”

In his remarks to parliament, Lawrence had concluded: “I am certainly very relieved that the possibility exists that the chant was not said.”

Some, it is clear, would not be “very relieved” by that possibility, but precisely the opposite. For the political and media establishment, the chants were a godsend, providing justification for the lie that all opposition to Israeli war crimes was antisemitic, and for their backing of an unfolding genocide.

These layers are not seeking to combat antisemitism. On the contrary, they are trying to create a hothouse atmosphere of communal tension, reframing the imperialist-backed onslaught against defenceless civilians as a racially or religiously based conflict between Muslims and Jews.

The specific chant, “gas the Jews,” was used to draw a connection between the defence of Israel, and opposition to the worst crime of the 20th century, the Holocaust. It dovetailed with the attempts of the Zionist regime to present the October 7 break out from Gaza as an episode of

irrational antisemitic violence, entirely unconnected to the 75-year oppression of the Palestinians or the 16-year siege of Gaza.

Despite its name, the AJA is not an accredited or recognised representative body of Australian Jewry. Even within the pro-Israeli milieu, it has at times been criticised by other Zionist organisations as potentially undermining their cause.

In 2018, the AJA publicly invited far-right Canadian internet personality Lauren Southern on a tour of Bondi in Sydney or Caulfield in Melbourne. That hand was extended after Southern complained that she had been blocked by police from staging provocations in areas of southwestern Sydney with a large Muslim population.

In addition to being an Islamophobe, Southern is a proponent of the “Great Replacement Theory.” It posits a conspiracy by “globalists,” a stand-in term used by fascists to describe Jews, aimed at displacing “white people” with Muslims and other immigrants.

During her 2018 trip to Australia, Southern was provided with security on at least one occasion by members of the Lads Society, including Jacob Hersant and Thomas Sewell. Already far-right thugs then, they have since come out as Hitler-loving Nazis, leading the National Socialist Network.

As the WSWs has insisted, the claim that the militarist state of Israel is representative of all Jewish people is a lie, which is itself antisemitic. Israel represents the interests of a small ruling elite, based on the most reactionary nationalist ideology, and is wholly dependent on the major imperialist powers. Meanwhile, growing numbers of Jewish people have played a powerful role in the global mass movement against the genocide in Gaza.



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