

Pro-Palestinian household targeted with bomb in Sydney, Australia

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On Friday afternoon, an improvised explosive device was found on the Sydney property of a man who has vocally opposed Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza over the past three months. It had apparently been placed there overnight.

Made of a jerry can, rags, disposable lighter and large bolts, the bomb was put on the man's car. It was accompanied by a note demanding that he take down Palestinian flags from his home in the eastern suburb of Botany. The note read: "Enough! Take down flag! One chance!!!!" In addition to flying a Palestinian flag, the victim had set up a board at the front of his home with information about Israel's mass murder.

New South Wales police have confirmed that their rescue and bomb squad attended the property and found a "suspicious item." They determined that it was not active.

The victim has since spoken to the media, using only his first name, Theo, out of fears for his safety.

Theo told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC): "Someone's come into our house at night. They've brought something they made to scare us. They want us to change what we're doing. It's also something which is clearly there to threaten me, to make me and my partner feel scared, feel terrified. This is terrorism."

News of the attack was first shared on X/Twitter, provoking considerable shock and anger. The individual who broke the story stated bluntly: "A Zionist strapped a bomb to someone's car because they didn't like that they proudly flew the Palestinian flag."

Fahad Ali, one of the organisers of the weekly mass protests in Sydney that have been held throughout the genocide, commented: "Zionists behave like this exactly because they expect there to be no consequences. They have enjoyed decades of impunity

and months of absolution for the most grotesque crimes against humanity."

The response of the media and political establishment has been very different to these forthright comments, even though they are clearly based on what is known about the incident and the broader context.

Most news outlets have now carried reports on the bomb, but they have all been marked by several glaring absences. Aside from Theo's own comment to the ABC, the word terrorism has not been used, even though the incident is a classic example, involving as it does the use of violence or threatened violence against a civilian for a political purpose.

There are people in "supermax" prisons, convicted of terror charges carrying decades-long sentences, who never came close to planting bombs. In a number of cases, vulnerable young Muslim men were caught up in the bogus "war on terror," prosecuted for the most serious offences on the basis of police and intelligence entrapments and loose talk.

The word "Israel" has not appeared in the articles, although support for the actions of that country would be the obvious reason for a violently hostile reaction to the presence of a Palestinian flag. "Zionist" also has not been used, despite proponents of that racialist and virulently nationalist ideology having been at the forefront of legitimising Israel's war crimes and seeking to intimidate supporters of Palestinians.

The muted response goes beyond a caution stemming from the fact that no suspects have been publicly identified and the perpetrator not apprehended. Instead, there is a definite attempt to downplay the incident.

That was underscored by the response of federal Labor MP Matt Thistlethwaite, whose electorate includes the house where the bomb was planted. On X/Twitter, he posted: "The scenes in Botany yesterday

were shocking and disturbing. There is no place in our community and in Australia for antisemitism, Islamophobia or any form of hate speech.”

Aside from the naming of Botany, it would have been entirely unclear what Thistlethwaite was even commenting about. His reference to antisemitism was entirely inappropriate and even inflammatory, given there is no conceivable connection between the targeting of a pro-Palestinian household with a bomb and racially-motivated hostility to the Jewish people.

The whipping-up of a communalist atmosphere and the slandering of all opposition to the Israeli regime as antisemitism, has gone hand in hand with the full support of the Labor government for the genocide.

Thistlethwaite is currently the acting defence minister. He is thus directly responsible for Australia’s complicity in the mass murder, including the likely use of the Pine Gap spy base in Central Australia to pinpoint Israeli strikes on Gaza, as well as the coming and going from Australian ports of the Zim shipping line, which in October dedicated its entire fleet to the Israeli war effort.

The response to the Botany bomb incident recalls two earlier events.

In early November, a Burgertory restaurant was burnt down in the Melbourne suburb of Caulfield in an act of arson. The store had been aggressively attacked by Zionist supporters of Israel because its owner, Hash Tayeh, is Palestinian and opposes the genocide. The campaign against Tayeh was so acute that he had to place his family in hiding.

However, the Victorian Police responded by immediately declaring that the arson attack was not politically or religiously motivated. It seems inconceivable that they could have made that determination given that no arrests over the incident have been made. Two months on and the Burgertory attack is simply never mentioned.

In late November, it was revealed that the previous month, 76-year-old Jewish Professor Peter Slezak had been assaulted and verbally abused on a Sydney street. His assailant appears to have been a Zionist, infuriated by Slezak’s condemnations of Israeli war crimes. The attack was the subject of a single bland article in the Murdoch-owned *Australian*.

Had any of these incidents involved the targeting of prominent supporters of Israel in a bomb attack, a

serious arson or an unprovoked assault on an elderly man, they would have been front page news for weeks, but because each of the incidents cut across the dominant narrative, they have simply been buried.

The decision of three young Sydney Theatre Company performers to wear Keffiyehs, Arabic scarves, during a curtain call on November 25 provoked weeks of media handwringing. Influential Zionists in the business establishment presented the silent wearing of the scarves as an act of violence that had caused irrevocable trauma.

Last week, the right-wing Murdoch-owned Sky News broke the “story” that a Qantas flight attendant had been pictured wearing a Palestinian flag pin on her uniform. Sky News interviewed a young man who said he had been “intimidated” by the pin, presenting it almost as a threat to aviation security. The young man, it transpired, is a prominent Liberal Party activist.

At the same time, there are ongoing assertions in the official media that weekly pro-Palestinian protests are somehow dangerous or threatening. The demonstrations have been held for the past three months without incident, in the longest-running protest movement in decades.

The media beat-ups against pro-Palestinian supporters have a ludicrous and absurd character, but they have created an intimidatory atmosphere, and one in which right-wing backers of Israel feel emboldened to carry out real acts of violence, confident that they will face no repercussions.



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