

# Australian media campaign to shut down protests against Israeli genocide

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An increasingly filthy campaign is being mounted by corporate media outlets, the police and governments in Australia to try to create the political conditions to shut down the widespread protests against the escalating Israeli genocide in Gaza and unleash the kind of police violence witnessed on US university campuses.

The Murdoch media's national flagship, the *Australian*, published a front-page editorial yesterday calling for a crackdown on an anti-genocide encampment at the University of Sydney.

Like American students and faculty members, the protesters have pitched tents at Australia's oldest university, demanding that it cut ties with Israeli universities and weapons manufacturers.

This is one of a growing number of Australian campuses where students and staff have launched such protests over the past week in solidarity with their US counterparts.

The same *Australian* front page blatantly sought to link the campus protest to an anti-Islamic witch hunt against seven Islamic teenagers, as young as 14, arrested on flimsy "terrorism" charges last week.

The boys were seized in huge raids, involving more than 400 police and intelligence agents, on homes across Sydney's southwestern working-class suburbs, despite the police admitting they had no evidence of a terrorist plot or plan. The teenagers were accused of being "associates" of a 16-year-old boy who allegedly stabbed an Assyrian Christian priest, Mar Mari Emmanuel, at a western Sydney church on April 15.

The *Australian* article claimed that "Sydney's Jewish leaders were on alert on Sunday night after revelations the alleged teenage terrorists arrested in a mass raid had been planning to target their community." This was all based on an unverified "police fact sheet," reportedly tendered to a children's court, alleging that one of the teenagers had said on a chat group that he wanted to "kill Jews."

The *Australian* editorial declared: "Unbeknown to most decent Australians, our nation has crossed a dangerous line, sliding into a dark place that must be repudiated." This supposed line was crossed because some children had attended the University of Sydney encampment, where they had participated in chants opposing the mass murder of Palestinians and calling for peace.

The placement of the editorial and the news story on the terror case in close proximity was a clear attempt to present opposition to the genocide, and involvement of children in that campaign, as some sort of gateway to terrorism.

According to the editorial, chants of "intifada"—which means

rising up against decades of Israeli oppression—and "other anti-Jewish slogans" show that the "nation's oldest university has lost its moral compass, like once-great colleges in the US and elsewhere."

These slogans include calling Israel "a terrorist state." That is an accurate designation for a regime that has killed at least 35,000 people, mostly women and children, and systematically destroyed hospitals, schools, universities and refugee camps over the past nearly seven months. This has taken to a new terrible level the decades of such anti-Palestinian violence before and since the creation of Israel in 1948.

While the initial targets of these incendiary accusations was the University of Sydney encampment, its logic extends to all demonstrations and statements opposing the Israeli mass killing. Echoing the slanders being uttered by US President Joe Biden and all the governments that are backing and arming the Israeli onslaught, the editorial falsely depicted the protest at the massacres being committed by the Zionist regime as "anti-Jewish" or antisemitic.

Far from being antisemitic, the campus protests in Australia, as in the US, are anti-genocide and anti-Zionist, with many Jewish students and educators taking part.

The front-page editorial branded as shameful the alleged failure of the Albanese Labor government and the University of Sydney chiefs to condemn the "grotesque" protest, claiming—without a skerrick of evidence—that it exposed Jewish students to the fear of harassment. It also targeted Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, an academic at Sydney's Macquarie University, saying her employers had "serious questions to answer" about her involvement in the protest and other anti-genocide campaigns.

Similarly, the editorial falsely branded the ongoing Gaza protests as "pro-Hamas." It declared they had "crossed several red lines from the Sydney Opera House spectacle on October 9 onwards." That is revealing. The Opera House protest was vilified by the media and the state and federal Labor governments on the basis of a concocted assertion by a Zionist group, later disproved, that a group of participants had yelled "gas the Jews."

Another coordinated slander campaign is clearly underway. On the weekend, the *Australian* publicised a letter issued by a body called the Australian Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism. It demands that the country's university chancellors block protests, and take disciplinary action against staff and students who participate in them, or put their funding and reputations at risk.

The University Chancellors Council, which includes former military and business chiefs, quickly agreed to address the letter at a meeting this Thursday.

This attack on the basic democratic right to protest is being accompanied by ever-more explicit attempts to link anti-genocide protesters to the allegations of “terrorism” against the Islamic teenagers arrested last week. The *Australian* regurgitated a sensationalist report from the *Daily Telegraph*, the Murdoch media’s Sydney tabloid, that members of the alleged “youth terror cell” reportedly “wanted to target Jews, were ready to ‘die’ for their cause, and called themselves ‘soldiers of Allah’ in a series of text messages.”

Yet again, the Murdoch outlets are evidently being fed with selected prejudicial accusations by the police, even from children’s court proceedings that are legally meant to be protected from public view. On the basis of allegations of loose, vague talk by one teenager, an image is being created of a dangerous conspiracy to murder Jews.

Under the inflammatory headline, “‘I wanna kill’: Inside the alleged Islamic teen plot to unleash terror,” the *Daily Telegraph* published what purported to be a transcript of posts on a Signal chat group involving four of the arrested teenagers. The police “fact sheet” claimed that one 15-year-old allegedly wrote: “I really want to target the yahood (Jewish people)... we will plan it.”

Even if this untested police accusation is accurate, and that must not be assumed, it amounts to vague talk by young boys.

Today, the *Australian* went further, citing more unverified police accusations that two of the boys had discussed trying to buy some kinds of guns. At the same time, the police “fact sheet” reportedly recorded one of the boys voicing concern that an undercover Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer might have infiltrated the chat group.

That points to the real possibility of police agents seeking to incite talk of violence. Similar entrapment has featured in many of the much-publicised terrorism cases in Australia since the “war on terror” was proclaimed in 2001 to try to justify the long-planned US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Most explicitly of all, the *Australian’s* foreign editor, Greg Sheridan, who has close connections in the US-linked intelligence apparatus, posted an opinion column today drawing a direct line between this supposed teenagers’ “plan to get weapons and kill Australian Jews” and the so-called “slogans of hate at Sydney University.”

Sheridan charged the Albanese government with being “grossly, morally and politically negligent in failing to make a serious effort to combat the wave of hateful anti-Semitism sweeping across our universities and many other parts of our community.”

The truth is the state and federal Labor governments threatened to outlaw the Gaza protests as soon as the Israeli regime began its massacres following the October 7 Hamas-led breakout from the Gaza enclave. But they were forced to back off by the sheer scale of the demonstrations, involving tens of thousands of people week after week, and the intensive hostility in working-class areas to Labor’s backing for the genocide.

Now a concerted witch hunt is underway to manufacture the pretext for sending in the police, as the Biden administration has

spearheaded in the US, working in partnership with the fascistic Republican Party of Donald Trump.

In a signal that the message is being acted upon, Labor’s Education Minister Jason Clare this morning stated: “There is no place for hate in our universities or anywhere else and it’s never OK to involve kids in things like this.” He was clearly referencing the *Australian’s* bogus campaign against the University of Sydney encampment.

As the WSWS has explained, the operation against the teenagers shows all the signs of an operation organised by the highest echelons of the police-intelligence agencies, and backed by the state and federal Labor governments, to create an “Islamic terrorist” scare campaign to justify a crackdown on all anti-genocide protests.

Within hours of the April 15 stabbing at the church, the police and intelligence chiefs, with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s personal involvement, initiated an official “terrorist” declaration, activating sweeping police powers. That was before the police had even spoken to the accused boy, whose parents have documented a history of his mental health problems.

Albanese then quickly convened a meeting of the “National Cabinet” security committee, which consists of key government ministers, the police, intelligence and military chiefs and top officials. It set the “counter-terrorism” raids in motion, led by the AFP and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the domestic political spy agency.

A concerted bid is being made to smear and suppress the intense opposition among workers and young people to the Albanese government’s support for the Israeli mass murderers and its commitment to the wider war drive of US imperialism against Iran, Russia and China, accompanied by Labor’s massive military spending and enforcement of a worsening cost-of-living and social crisis in working-class areas.

That escalating war commitment was underscored by Defence Minister Richard Marles’ visits last week to the Australian military personnel participating in the attacks on the Houthis in Yemen who are trying to block shipments to Israel, and to Ukraine, where he announced another \$100 million for the US-NATO proxy war against Russia.

A warning must be sounded. Having previously threatened to outlaw protests against the Gaza genocide, the Labor leaders are now working with the media and the police-intelligence apparatus to stoke fears of terrorism to seek to create the conditions for police repression, as in the US, of anti-war dissent.



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