

Six years after Christchurch massacre in New Zealand by fascist Brenton Tarrant

Tom Peters**16 March 2025**

March 15 marked six years since the fascist terrorist Brenton Tarrant massacred 51 people and injured dozens more in mass shootings at two mosques in Christchurch.

The anniversary of New Zealand's worst mass shooting—which the United Nations designated in 2022 as an International Day to Combat Islamophobia—attracted minimal media coverage. Successive governments have sought to suppress public discussion of the atrocity, including how Tarrant was able to carry out the attack, his links to fascist organisations, and his admiration for US President Trump and other far-right politicians.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon delivered a hypocritical speech at a memorial meeting in Christchurch, declaring that “Islamophobia, like all forms of hatred, has absolutely no place in New Zealand, and it is our duty to challenge it wherever it appears, whether it's in words, policies, or in the silence that allows prejudice to fester.”

In Australia, Tarrant's home country, Labor Party Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in a similar statement, “Australia stands firm against any expression or act of hatred or hostility toward the Muslim community.”

Who do these politicians think they are fooling? Both governments and the entire political and media establishment have spent the past two years supporting the US-Israeli genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza and demonizing pro-Palestine protesters. Students, academics, doctors, nurses, journalists, artists and others who have expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people are being smeared as “anti-semites” and, in some cases, forced out of their jobs.

Research by the Islamophobia Register of Australia has found that instances of anti-Muslim abuse more than doubled between January 2023 and November 2024—especially after Israel began its genocidal assault on Gaza in October 2023. The report highlighted physical attacks on people wearing the Palestinian keffiyeh and the hijab, as well as an arson attack on a Palestinian restaurant, and a bomb being planted on a car outside a house displaying the Palestinian flag.

Rosemary Omar, who lost her son Tariq during the massacre at Al Noor Mosque, told Radio NZ she had “very little faith” that a similar attack will not occur. She noted that Tarrant had many admirers and pointed to the recent threat by a teenager from Western Australia to carry out a “Christchurch 2.0” attack against a mosque in Sydney.

New Zealand's right-wing coalition government launched a

witch-hunt in January against Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa, which has organised many protests against the genocide. Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, from the right-wing nationalist NZ First Party, made inflammatory statements, falsely accusing the group of “fascism, racism, and encouragement of violence and vigilantism.”

Peters, who is also New Zealand's foreign minister, is currently visiting the United States, where he will grovel before the fascistic President Donald Trump, who Tarrant hailed in his manifesto as a “symbol of white renewal.” Peters will reiterate New Zealand's support for US-led wars in the Middle East—where NZ personnel are assisting in the bombing of Yemen—and the militarisation of the Indo-Pacific region in preparation for war against China.

The NZ government and opposition Labour Party welcomed Trump's election victory and inauguration, which was marked by two Nazi salutes by billionaire Elon Musk. They have made no criticism of the Trump administration's assault on democratic rights, including plans to deport millions of immigrants and the arrest of pro-Palestine protesters such as Mahmoud Khalil.

NZ First was also part of the Labour Party-led government of Jacinda Ardern when the 2019 terror attack happened. The international media glorified Ardern for her performative acts of “kindness,” while ignoring her alliance with NZ First and Labour's support for its anti-immigrant policies. NZ First has a long record of racist agitation against Asian and Middle Eastern migrants and Muslims.

In the days following the Christchurch massacre, the *World Socialist Web Site* opposed the propaganda that Tarrant was a lone actor who could not have been stopped and whose actions had nothing to do with the policies of the Ardern government. The New Zealand and Australian ruling classes had for decades fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment, including by joining the criminal US-led “war on terror” and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The WSWS warned that the attack was “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.”

This is even truer today than it was six years ago.

While Trump has returned to power, the neo-Nazi AfD is now the largest opposition party in Germany and the government has adopted its anti-immigrant policies. Italy’s government is now led by Mussolini admirer Giorgia Meloni, and far-right parties in France, Austria and across eastern Europe are all setting the agenda for the militarisation of the continent and expelling migrants and refugees.

In addition to fully backing the genocide in Gaza and seeking to criminalize domestic opposition, the European powers are escalating the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, where the Zelensky regime and its military are infested with Nazi admirers.

Tarrant visited Ukraine prior to carrying out his 2019 attack, and told his family he liked it so much that he considered moving there. The rucksack he carried during the massacre was emblazoned with the *sonnenrad* (black sun) symbol used by the neo-Nazi Azov movement, which has been integrated into Ukraine’s armed forces.

Discussion about Tarrant’s links to fascist groups internationally has been deliberately suppressed. Ardern instructed the media not to report on Tarrant’s views and declared that she would never speak his name.

In an anti-democratic decision, the New Zealand state made it a crime to possess his manifesto, which expressed admiration for Trump and far-right parties in Europe, indicated that he had contact with groups in Europe, and made clear the similarity between his anti-immigrant views and those of NZ First and other establishment parties.

A royal commission of inquiry was held in secret in 2020 and evidence presented by the police and the intelligence agencies, as well as statements by Tarrant himself, have not been released. It reached the conclusion—unsupported by any evidence—that Tarrant had acted entirely alone and could not have been stopped.

Tarrant had well-known links to the neo-Nazi Lads Society in Australia, whose leader Thomas Sewell tried to recruit him. Sewell’s current organisation, the National Socialist Network, continues to operate in Australia with protection from the police and the judicial system.

Questions remain about why Tarrant was not arrested in Australia when he made death threats in 2016 against opponents of the United Patriots Front, the Lads Society’s predecessor. Another opportunity to stop Tarrant was missed when New Zealand police failed to investigate a complaint about anti-Muslim threats made by members of the Bruce Rifle Club, where Tarrant trained for his attack. The royal commission accepted claims by police that they did not receive any complaint about the club.

In response to widespread anger from the victims’ families over the royal commission’s whitewash of state agencies, a coronial inquiry into the massacre was launched in 2022 and is ongoing. Coroner Brigitte Windley restricted the scope of the inquiry to focus on the events of March 15, 2019, whether Tarrant’s online activity “contributed to his radicalization,” and why Tarrant was able to obtain a firearms licence. She made clear

that she will not release information gathered by the royal commission that remains restricted for “national security” reasons.

The main response by the state to the Christchurch massacre was to give more money and power to the spy agencies and to boost internet censorship which is aimed, not against the far-right, but against left-wing and socialist groups. Ardern set up the Christchurch Call to Action in collaboration with the Macron government in France, which is notorious for its anti-Muslim demagogic, to establish protocols to remove so-called “terrorist and violent extremist content” from online platforms.

The Christchurch Call is supported by 55 governments—including the US, Germany, Britain and others which have denounced socialist and anti-war activism as “extremism”—and 19 tech and social media companies, including Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft and X (Twitter).

The billionaire owners of these companies have embraced the Trump administration and are promoting its agenda of militarism, racism and extreme reaction. They are censoring the WSWS and numerous anti-war websites and pro-Palestinian voices while amplifying fascists.

The main lesson that must be drawn from the Christchurch massacre and everything that has happened in the past six years, is that the danger of fascism cannot be halted by appeals to capitalist governments. The imperialist powers are lurching to the right and promoting the same extreme nationalist ideology espoused by Tarrant as they defend unprecedented levels of social inequality and prepare for war to redivide the world.

There is mass opposition to fascism in every country, but history—including the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s—demonstrates that anger and opposition is not enough. What is urgently required is the building of a socialist party, capable of mobilising the political power of the international working class to put an end to the capitalist system, which is the root cause of war, fascism and inequality. This is the program fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International, and the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand.



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