

US cops shoot Australian journalist amid Trump's dictatorial rampage

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Lauren Tomasi, a correspondent for Australia's Nine Network, was shot yesterday by US cops with a rubber bullet while covering the massive police mobilisation ordered by the Trump administration in Los Angeles.

The assault, and many others like it, exposes the official pretext for the enormous deployment of state forces. As the WSWs has explained, the Trump regime is not responding to "rioting," much less an "insurrection," as it claims. Instead, it has seized upon largely peaceful protests against the government's roundup of immigrants to escalate protracted plans for the abolition of the Constitution and the establishment of a presidential dictatorship.

That agenda entails a sweeping assault on democratic rights, including freedom of the press. Tomasi is one of dozens of journalists to have been shot by the police with rubber bullets in recent days.

The attack on the Australian reporter is striking because it was caught on camera and was clearly a targeted shooting. Footage posted by Nine shows Tomasi speaking to the camera, with her back turned to a line of heavily armed cops. Apropos of nothing, one of them lines her up and shoots her in the leg, with onlookers voicing outrage at the deliberate attack on a clearly marked journalist.

The footage has gone viral in Australia, the US and internationally. Nine's own post to X has been viewed almost 5 million times, while another post by a US-based account has a similar audience. Thousands of people have condemned the attack as something that would occur under a dictatorship or in a police state.

The response of the Australian political and media establishment has been the exact opposite. They have downplayed the incident and said nothing about its political implications, in keeping with a complete silence on the authoritarian aims of the Trump

administration's rampage in LA.

The cover-up was begun by Nine itself. To substantial opposition, it described Tomasi as having been "caught in the crossfire," in its X post with the footage of the shooting.

The response of the Labor government can only be described as an after-the-fact complicity in a violent assault on an Australian citizen and journalist.

Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Foreign Minister Penny Wong and other government central leaders did not mention the assault on Tomasi for the best part of a day.

Albanese only addressed the issue when he could not avoid it. After a scheduled address to the National Press Club, he was asked by a reporter about the attack. Albanese branded it as "unacceptable," and vaguely claimed to have raised the matter with the US administration.

The only prior official response was a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) statement to the press yesterday. It misrepresented the circumstances of a shooting that had already been viewed by millions of people.

"The Australian Consulate-General in Los Angeles is in contact with an Australian injured in protests, and stands ready to provide consular assistance if required," it said. Tomasi was not "injured in" or by protests, but was the victim of a targeted police shooting while doing her job.

DFAT vaguely affirmed its commitment to "media freedom," adding that "All journalists should be able to do their work safely." But it did not say who or what had imperilled that democratic right in Tomasi's case.

In a display of contempt for the journalist and the public, DFAT noted travel advice for "Australians to avoid areas where demonstrations and protests are

occurring due to the ongoing potential for unrest and violence.”

But Tomasi was not a random tourist who had stumbled into protests. In the context of what had occurred, DFAT’s decision to include that advisory was a nod to the Trumpian line that journalists who cover the actions of the police are putting themselves in danger and best stay home.

It is not difficult to imagine that the response to such an assault on an Australian journalist in China, Russia or another country in the crosshairs of US and allied imperialism would be entirely different. Albanese and government leaders would denounce in the most strident terms a blatant attack on press freedom. The ambassador of the relevant country would likely be called in for a dressing down, and there would be discussion of sanctions.

The Labor government, however, and the entire political establishment is committed to the US alliance. Labor has, since Trump’s election victory in November, done everything it can to deepen relations with the fascist in the White House.

Foreign Minister Wong attended Trump’s inauguration in January. Having sat through Trump and other leaders of the new administration denouncing immigrants and political opponents in Hitlerian fashion, Wong told the press she was “very honoured to represent our country at such an important event.”

Labor was reelected in May, largely because the opposition Liberal-National Coalition was identified in popular consciousness with Trump. Having won the election on the basis of an anti-Trump vote, one of Albanese’s first acts was to phone Trump himself. Trump praised the Labor leader as a “friend,” while Albanese said it was a “warm” conversation.

The discussion centred on AUKUS, the militarist pact between the US, the UK and Australia directed against China. Completing Australia’s transformation into a frontline state for a US-led war was the central priority of Labor’s first term in office, and will be at an even higher level the focus of its second term.

The shooting of Tomasi is strikingly reminiscent of a similar incident in June, 2020. Two Australian journalists, of the Seven network, were violently assaulted by riot police in Washington DC, with the footage going viral and provoking widespread anger.

That attack occurred amid Trump’s first term in

office. He responded to mass protests against the police killing of George Floyd by threatening to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 and to institute effective martial law, but failed due to opposition in the military. Drawing on the lessons of that experience, the second Trump administration has drawn up a blueprint for achieving that end.

In 2020, the Coalition was the Australian government. Its Prime Minister Scott Morrison refused to condemn the police attack.

Morrison was a far-right figure, who had publicly identified himself with Trump. The parallel between Morrison’s response in 2020 and Albanese’s in 2025 underscores the fact that the entire political establishment in Australia is lurching far to the right.

Labor, under Albanese, has supported the mass slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza by Israel, in one of the worst war crimes since the 1930s. Just as it has participated in the normalisation of genocide, so too is Labor joining in the normalisation of an attempt to establish dictatorship in the United States, the centre of world capitalism.



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