

Police attack pro-Palestinian protesters in Sydney leaving 1 seriously injured

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Police set upon a small group of pro-Palestinian protesters in Sydney early yesterday morning, after declaring their peaceful demonstration “unauthorised” and demanding that it disperse. Footage posted to social media showed cops charging at participants and attacking them on the public street where the rally was held.

A participant suffered horrific injuries, with photos showing one side of her face, including her eye, badly wounded. The victim, Hannah Thomas, stood as a Greens candidate in the May federal election, contesting Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s seat of Grayndler.

Thomas was reportedly present at the protest as a legal observer. That, combined with the extent of her injuries, suggestive of an extremely forceful blow to the face, points to the lawlessness of the police attack. Thomas’ family have stated that her injuries are so severe that she may permanently lose sight in her eye.

The protest was held in the working-class south-west suburb of Belmore, outside the SEC Plating factory.

Activists have targeted the company due to its alleged involvement in the global arms industry supply chain. SEC, which provides advanced electroplating and coating, has previously been listed as a participant in Lockheed Martin’s construction of F-35 fighter jets.

The Israeli military has used F-35s to drop bombs on Gaza, as part of its mass murder and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. SEC has told the press that it is not currently involved in any F-35 projects, but the company continues to list defence and aerospace as among the industries it services.

Activists have repeatedly protested outside the factory over the past year, drawing attention to the involvement of Australian companies in the arms sector. Those events have been held largely without incident.

A statement posted by the organisers, “Weapons out of western Sydney,” as well as comments by participants, indicate a preemptive decision by the police to treat yesterday’s rally differently and to ensure that it did not proceed.

The demonstrators, who assembled at 6 a.m. and numbered little over 30, were reportedly met by 50 or more police officers, some of them from the riot squad. The statement said that police referenced something they claimed had occurred at a previous picket and gave a move-on order.

The protesters were “then almost immediately assaulted, with people being choked, slammed into fences, and beaten for questioning the legality of the order.” Thomas was “battered by two officers with no apparent cause. Medics were barred by police from providing her first aid, with officers responding to the severity of her injuries by saying ‘that’s on you.’”

Another protester “was stopped and strip searched illegally in front of the crowd despite temperatures in the single digits, with no option for privacy, conducted in a degrading manner. They were arrested despite the fact that nothing was found.” Five people, including Thomas, were arrested.

The very large police deployment, which would have involved officers from multiple areas, makes clear that the attack on the protest was coordinated at high levels of the New South Wales (NSW) Police command, almost certainly after discussions with the state Labor government of Premier Chris Minns.

That likelihood is also indicated by the grounds for the dispersal, which as the organisers have stated are highly dubious from a legal standpoint. In statements to the press, the police have described the rally as “unauthorised,” noting that organisers are supposed to give them seven days’ notice before a public assembly.

The police, however, do not authorise protests. If they receive such a notice and object to a protest, the onus is on the police and state authorities to have the courts bar an assembly from occurring.

The police appear to have invoked the state’s far-reaching anti-protest laws. In 2022, NSW Labor joined hands with the state’s then Liberal-National government to pass the legislation, which can outlaw demonstrations on the vague grounds that they could cause “disruptions” to any “major facilities” or economic activity. As far-reaching as those

provisions are, it is not clear how they could apply to a peaceful gathering on a public footpath of a suburban street.

The Minns government, presiding over the most populous state in the country, has collaborated closely with the federal Labor administration to vilify, intimidate and attempt to suppress mass hostility to the Israeli genocide and Australia's complicity in it.

In the days after the October 7, 2023 Palestinian military operation, Minns ordered that the sails of the Sydney Opera House be lit up with the Israeli flag, while the Zionist regime was already indiscriminately bombing the Gaza Strip.

Days later, he threatened to illegalise the first of a series of weekly mass protests against the genocide. Minns activated sweeping powers for the NSW Police to question, search and detain anyone in the vicinity of that first protest. Though they were not ultimately used, the measure was clearly aimed at striking fear into ordinary people.

The NSW Labor government has overseen a series of police assaults against pro-Palestinian actions.

In November 2023, NSW Police went on a rampage against peaceful protesters at Port Botany in Sydney. They were opposing the frequent use of the Port by ZIM, an Israeli shipping line that has dedicated its entire fleet to assisting the Israeli war effort. Protesters conducting a peaceful sit-in were dragged, pushed and beaten, while 23 were arrested under the anti-protest laws, threatening them with massive fines or even two years' imprisonment.

A similar assault was carried out against another Port Botany demonstration in March, 2024. The same month, police violently arrested three people at one of the weekly Sydney demonstrations against the genocide, for the "crime" of having poured red paint on themselves to symbolise the mass death in Gaza. A young man was thrown to the ground and pinned down by multiple burly riot cops.

In October last year, the Minns government unsuccessfully sought to ban a Sydney rally opposing the Israeli assaults on Gaza and Lebanon. The same month, heavily-armed NSW Police brutally arrested students engaging in a peaceful sit-in at Western Sydney University.

The record demonstrates that the NSW government's perspective, since the genocide began, has been to outlaw opposition. It took a further step in that direction in March, passing "hate speech" laws which are so vague, they could be used to outlaw strident criticisms of Zionism, and additional anti-protest laws, barring demonstrations near "places of worship." Given the ubiquity of churches and other religious sites, the latter measure could be used to illegalise virtually any protest.

The basis of the March laws has been exposed as a fraud. A purported wave of "antisemitic" graffiti incidents, invoked as a pretext by the Minns government, has been

revealed by police as a hoax perpetrated by criminals. So too was an abandoned caravan containing explosives and a supposed target list, including Jewish sites, discovered in an outer suburb of Sydney.

In January, Minns branded the unattended vehicle a "potential mass casualty event" and an example of "terrorism," even though it appears that police had already told him it may have been a "conjob" perpetrated by criminals seeking to bargain with the authorities. Minns staffers finally appeared before a NSW parliamentary inquiry into the caravan on Friday morning, after they were threatened with arrest for failing to comply.

The latest police attack, in other words, occurred under conditions where the bogus pretexts used by the government to attack pro-Palestinian sentiments are increasingly exposed. That was underscored on Wednesday, when Antoinette Lattouf won her case against the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, with the federal court finding the journalist had been illegally sacked at the behest of Zionist lobbyists, because of her criticisms of Israel.

The protests outside factories such as SEC Plating are also likely a particular cause of irritation for the powers-that-be, because the federal Labor government and all the state administrations claim that Australia has no weapons trade with Israel. In reality, it is known that a number of weapons facilities supply Israel, including one in Melbourne that is the sole manufacturer of a crucial component of the F-35 fighter jets, without which they could not function.

Such exports can only occur under a permit system overseen by the Defence Department and the federal Labor government, as part of its ongoing political, diplomatic and military support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the broader eruption of imperialist militarism, including the war against Iran.



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