

Australian government, Netanyahu incite hysteria over murky “antisemitic” incident

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The Australian Labor government has responded to a murky arson incident at a Melbourne synagogue with a hysteria that is out of all proportion to what occurred. Prior to any serious investigation, senior Labor ministers have presented the small fire as an “attack on Australia,” requiring a massive police and intelligence response on a national scale.

Significantly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, along with that country’s president, very rapidly denounced the incident in similar terms.

Without a shred of evidence, Labor, the corporate media and the Israeli leaders have immediately linked the arson to peaceful protest actions opposing the Israeli genocide in Gaza. This is a continuation of the fraudulent effort to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism and to brand all defenders of the Palestinians as antisemites.

Over recent weeks, that campaign had suffered a number of blows.

Last month, Antoinette Lattouf won a federal court case against the Australian Broadcasting Corporation challenging her December 2023 sacking. The judge ruled the termination, based on Lattouf criticising Israel’s starvation of Palestinians, was illegal and was carried out at the behest of Zionist lobbyists.

Then Khaled Sabsabi was reinstated as the country’s official representative at the 2026 Venice Biennale. This was a massive climbdown by Creative Australia, which had previously acceded to a bogus witch-hunt depicting the artist as a supporter of the proscribed Lebanese Hezbollah movement.

Whatever the exact balance between outright state provocation and “happy coincidence,” the arson, and above all the response to it, has the character of a calculated effort to rollback those defeats and to ensure that they do not obstruct the protracted campaign to criminalise opposition to the genocide.

The arson occurred at the East Melbourne Synagogue on Friday night. The location obviously indicates that antisemitism may have been a motive. And disturbingly, the attack was carried out when more than 20 worshippers were inside the building.

While information remains limited, already there are oddities surrounding the arson. Images show very limited damage to the

front door of the synagogue, indicating, thankfully, that the attack was never going to jeopardise the building or those inside.

On Saturday evening, police arrested Angelo Loras over the arson. He reportedly has no criminal history, and is from Sydney, not Melbourne. Loras’ social media accounts do not indicate any interest in Gaza or the Palestinians. They suggest that Loras may be a troubled individual. Aside from comments bizarrely complimenting selfies of himself, Loras’ interactions appear primarily to be with spam bots.

How and why Loras was in Melbourne has not been revealed. Nor why he took no serious efforts to conceal his identity, with his face recorded on CCTV, in what was a crude and unsuccessful arson attempt.

Loras has been charged, but only with standard criminal offences relating to arson, damaging property and endangering life. Victorian Police have not declared the arson a terrorist attack. Senior officers have stated they are still investigating “the intent and ideology of the persons involved or person,” and are at this stage classifying it as a “serious criminal incident.”

The federal Labor government has simply ignored those statements, and treated the arson as though it were already proven to be an act of terrorism.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese released a video, branding it as an act of politically-motivated “antisemitism.” On Sunday, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke visited the Synagogue. He declared that what occurred was “not simply an arson attack; what matters here is there is an attack on Australia, an attack on Australian values.”

The government and the media have linked the arson to two other incidents in Melbourne on Friday night. Burke stated: “There were three attacks that night, and none of them belonged in Australia. Arson attacks, the chanting calls for death, other attacks and graffiti.”

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu similarly declared on X: “The reprehensible antisemitic attacks, with calls of ‘Death to the IDF’ and an attempt to attack a place of worship, are severe hate crimes that must be uprooted.” He added: “We demand that the Australian government take all action to deal with the rioters to the fullest extent of the law and prevent similar

attacks in the future.”

Again, all of those statements contradict what has been said by Victorian Police. They have indicated there is no evidence of any connection between the three incidents in Melbourne on Friday night.

One of them was a protest at Miznon, a restaurant. Activists have stated that it was targeted because it is part-owned by Israeli national Shahar Segal. He is a spokesman for the Gaza Humanitarian Fund (GHF), which is funded by the US and Israeli governments and is widely viewed as an institution controlled by the CIA and Mossad.

The GHF has overseen food distribution operations in Gaza, at which hundreds of Palestinians have been killed. It has been denounced by all reputable human rights organisations, as well as the United Nations, as a mechanism for Israel’s ethnic-cleansing of Palestine.

Activists chanted slogans against the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and reportedly disrupted Miznon’s operations for the night. But there is simply no comparison between that protest, clearly targeting an institution linked to the Israeli state, and an arson attack on a synagogue.

The third incident involved graffiti and arson at a factory of Lovitt Technologies, a weapons company with links to Israel.

The campaign to conflate the three distinct and apparently unrelated events has since been broadened. Corporate outlets and Zionist leaders have denounced the fact that a mass protest against the genocide was held in Melbourne on Sunday afternoon. Zionist lobbyists, who have the closest ties to the Israeli state, have declared that anti-Zionist chants, condemning the IDF, are responsible for creating a “climate” in which the synagogue arson could occur.

Their aim has always been to criminalise protest actions opposing the genocide and Australia’s complicity. Zionist leaders have previously stated that the frequent mass protests condemning Israel’s war crimes have rendered the city centres “no go areas” for Jews. That lie is exposed by the entirely peaceful character of the mass rallies, over a period now approaching two years, and the significant participation of anti-Zionist Jewish activists.

Labor governments have taken substantial steps to outlaw public opposition. Earlier this year, the federal Labor government passed sweeping “hate speech” laws, which are so broad and vague, they could criminalise strident denunciations of Zionism.

The New South Wales (NSW) state Labor government passed similar legislation, alongside new anti-protest laws providing for a ban on public assemblies near places of worship. Given the ubiquity of religious institutions, that statute could be used to illegalise any protests.

The federal and NSW laws were justified on the basis of a spate of “antisemitic” attacks in Sydney in late 2024 and early this year. They involved crude graffiti and small-scale arson. An unattended caravan of explosives was also discovered in an

outer suburb of Sydney, together with a purported target list of Jewish institutions. Labor leaders rushed to proclaim the abandoned vehicle a “terrorism” incident.

Only after the passage of the NSW and federal laws did police reveal that the attacks were a hoax. They were perpetrated by small-time criminals, with no political or ideological motives. Police claimed that those who carried out the attacks were being paid by an overseas criminal, who was seeking to barter with the authorities.

That completely exposed the bogus antisemitism campaign. But the police explanation was partial and unconvincing. They never outlined why the criminals had chosen such a specific, political issue and method by which to barter with police, and one that was likely to create even greater legal problems for them.

The Sydney incidents, moreover, were directly invoked to carry out substantial changes to the law, directed against the pro-Palestinian movement. That followed demands by Netanyahu and other senior Israeli figures who cited the bogus attacks.

The Melbourne synagogue arson is reminiscent of what occurred in Sydney, from the modus operandi of arson, to the perpetrator appearing to be an apolitical and troubled individual, to the immediate intervention of Netanyahu and the overblown response of the government.

Whatever the exact circumstances, opponents of the genocide should be on guard against provocations and frame-ups.

Even more importantly, they must draw political lessons from the experiences of the past two years. The right to protest must be defended. But it is absolutely clear that protests oriented to pressuring the Labor government to end its support for the genocide have failed. The greater the public opposition, the more ferocious have been Labor’s attacks on civil liberties.

The only viable perspective to defeat the genocide, the eruption of imperialist militarism of which it is a part, and the related turn to authoritarianism, is a socialist and revolutionary one, based on a political struggle against Labor, the entire political establishment and the capitalist system that is the source of the descent into barbarism.



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