

Australian government provocatively accuses Iran of antisemitic attacks

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At a press conference yesterday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese stated that Iran was responsible for two antisemitic attacks in Australia last year. The bald declaration, which was not substantiated with a shred of evidence, had the character of a diplomatic and geopolitical provocation against Iran, coordinated with allied powers including the US.

Albanese announced that Iran's ambassador and other diplomatic staff were being expelled, the first such move by an Australian government against another country since World War II.

Albanese reported that the Australian embassy in Tehran had been shut and its diplomats had already been rushed out of Iran. He declared he would introduce legislation to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a key component of the Iranian state apparatus, as a "terrorist" organisation.

These are the kinds of actions generally taken against an adversary in war. Within the framework of diplomatic norms, such expulsions approach an act of war.

The most striking aspect of the press conference was a glaring discrepancy between the scale of these actions, and the paucity of the claims on which they were purportedly based. Not only were the accusations entirely unsubstantiated, they were also highly improbable. They have been immediately rejected as fabrications by the Iranian government.

While Albanese and other senior Labor government ministers made declarations against Iran, the conference was effectively led by Mike Burgess, the head of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

As the chief of the domestic spy outfit, Burgess has repeatedly delivered speeches over recent years, including one late last month, alleging pervasive "interference" in Australia by foreign governments, without providing any details or proof.

His comments yesterday were along those lines. Burgess said: "Iran has sought to disguise its involvement, but ASIO assesses it was behind the attacks on the Lewis' Continental

Kitchen in Sydney on October 20 last year, and the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne on December 6, last year."

Iran had not directly carried out those attacks. Instead, Burgess claimed that there was a "layer cake of cut-outs between IRGC and the person or the alleged perpetrators conducting crimes."

The two attacks Burgess referenced were part of a series of strange incidents, involving crude antisemitic or anti-Israeli graffiti and sometimes arson, which were perpetrated primarily in Sydney between October 2024 and January this year.

At the time, the Labor government, state governments and corporate media presented the incidents as proof of an unprecedented wave of "antisemitism." Together with the Israeli government, they sought to smear the mass opposition to Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza as antisemitic.

The incidents were invoked by the federal Labor government to pass sweeping "hate speech" laws, which potentially outlaw strident condemnations of Zionism and Israeli war crimes. In the state of New South Wales (NSW), similar measures were legislated, together with far-reaching anti-protest laws.

Only after that did NSW and federal police confirm that all of the incidents in Sydney had been perpetrated by criminals, not for ideological motives, but for money. They were said to be working on behalf of higher-level criminals seeking to barter with police for favours such as sentence reductions.

Relatively low-level criminals were charged earlier this year over the Lewis' Continental Kitchen fire in eastern Sydney. The arson was amateurish. Police claim that the criminals had mistakenly targeted different businesses twice, before setting the restaurant aflame.

Two men have been arrested over recent weeks, accused of perpetrating the Adass Israel Synagogue. Police similarly claim they are criminals, who have also been linked to a nightclub fire and other politically-unrelated offences.

Asked by journalists how the Iranian regime was linked to

Australian criminals, Burgess similarly reiterated his earlier statement about “layers” and various “cut-outs.”

Some of his explanations were incoherent and contradictory. Having referred to the Iranian government, he stated: “In between them, they tap into a number of people, agents of IRGC, and people that they know in the criminal world, and work through there, so it’s a series of chains. There’s an organised crime element offshore in this. But that’s not to suggest organised crime are doing it.”

Follow-up questions were brushed off with references to “national security”, and the impermissibility of government officials commenting on matters before the courts, apparently a reference to the minor criminals who have been charged.

Burgess’ assertions, absent any evidence whatsoever, would not stand up to any judicial scrutiny. Just as significantly, neither he, nor Albanese and the other government ministers could outline a credible motive for Iranian involvement in the attacks.

Why would the government of Iran devote resources to attacking a synagogue in Melbourne, whose Orthodox congregation is said to eschew politics, and a small restaurant in Sydney? Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke claimed Iran was motivated by “hate” and “antisemitism.”

Albanese declared the attacks were an attempt to “undermine social cohesion and sow discord in our community.” He did not explain, and frankly could not, why Iran would have any interest in “sowing discord” in Australia.

Significantly Burgess stated that ASIO’s assessment had been reached following an investigation that involved “liaison with foreign partners.” Australia is a member of the US-led Five Eyes spying network, along with the US, the UK, Canada and New Zealand. The “foreign partners” thus would have included the main US government and intelligence agencies.

It is only two months since the US launched missile strikes on Iran. That flagrant and illegal act of war was based on lying claims, by the very same US agencies, that Iran may have been seeking to develop nuclear weapons, contrary to the assessment of international nuclear enforcement authorities.

The rapid response to the Albanese/Burgess announcement also points to international coordination. The Trump administration rushed out a statement, declaring that it “applauds this action by the Australian government.”

The very day of the announcement, Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles was in Washington for talks with US Vice-President J.D. Vance and Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth. Nothing has been publicly released about what was discussed in the unscheduled meetings.

The most extraordinary response was from the Israeli government. A spokesman essentially claimed credit for Albanese’s announcement, presenting it as a reaction by the Australian government to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s denunciations of it last week.

Spokesman Dave Mercer declared that “Netanyahu has made a very forthright intervention when it comes to Australia, a country in which we have a long history of friendly relations.” The expulsion of the Iranian ambassador was a “very positive outcome” of that intervention.

Netanyahu had publicly denounced Albanese as a “weak leader” who had “betrayed Israel” and Australia’s Jewish community, with its token and worthless pledge to “recognise” a Palestinian state. In a letter to Albanese, he had even set a deadline for unspecified action to crackdown on supposed antisemitism, of September 25.

Whoever and whatever was behind the murky incidents in Melbourne and Sydney, the geopolitics of what is now unfolding is clear. Australia, acting in concert with the US and Israel, is seeking to demonise the Iranian regime, under conditions where Israeli and other international analysts have stated there is a prospect of renewed strikes against Tehran.

Domestically, the announcement is a further move to conflate mass opposition to the genocide with antisemitism and to present it as the product of nefarious “foreign interference.” The announcement stands as a rebuke to those, such as the Greens and pseudo-left groups who claimed that Albanese was shifting away from support for the Gaza genocide, as a consequence of mass pressure. It was a clear signal from the Labor government that it remains fully committed to the US-led war drive throughout the Middle East and globally.



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