

Australian government's Zionist envoy leads mayors summit to push censorship

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8 September 2025

From Wednesday to Friday last week, local government leaders from across the country gathered in a luxury hotel on the Gold Coast for an event billed as the “Australian Mayors Summit Against Antisemitism.”

Its name notwithstanding, the event had nothing to do with countering anti-Jewish or any other form of bigotry. It had the character of a gaudy and bizarre junket, aimed at intensifying a witch hunt against mass popular opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza and the Australian government's complicity.

The gathering was headlined by Jillian Segal, the Labor government's special envoy to combat antisemitism. Segal is a businesswoman and a long term Zionist lobbyist.

The summit was her first initiative since she released a report in July, demanding an unprecedented police-state crackdown on pro-Palestinian sentiment. The report, which contained no evidence for its assertions of rampant antisemitism, called for a campaign of censorship targeting the press, universities, publicly funded institutions and virtually all areas of civil society.

The cynical and bogus invocation of antisemitism to defend the Israeli state found expression in a press conference Segal delivered on the opening day of the summit.

Only four days earlier, anti-immigration marches had been held around Australia. The events were effectively led by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Network, which in Melbourne also went on a violent rampage, particularly targeting Indigenous people.

Extraordinarily, Segal, questioned about the display involving frothingly antisemitic Nazis, responded: “I don't want to comment on any particular incidents.” Zionist lobby groups, which have sought to tar opposition to the genocide as antisemitism, have been similarly muted.

Neither have been so restrained in their condemnation

of the anti-genocide, pro-Palestinian protests that have been held virtually weekly for the past almost two years. The protests have been libelled as antisemitic, pro-terrorist events with calls from the Zionist groups for the state and federal governments to ban them.

The summit was part of a global initiative by the US-based Combat Antisemitism Movement. That organisation is heavily associated with American and Israeli Zionist networks that have close ties to both the US and Israeli states.

It reportedly offered to cover all of the expenses involved in the mayors taking part, from travel to accommodation.

A central focus of the Combat Antisemitism Movement is the official adoption everywhere of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. That was also the crux of Segal's July report and it is the first point in an “action plan” for local councils drawn up by the organisers of the mayors conference.

The action plan emphasises the “illustrative” examples of the IHRA definition, which have been broadly denounced as politically-motivated. The examples brand as antisemitic declaring that the Israeli state is a racist endeavour or comparing its actions to those of the Nazis.

In her remarks, Segal pointed to the importance of local councils, declaring: “Local government is where Australians live their lives and what you decide to do will shape how safe people feel every day—at the sportsground, at the high street and the school gate.”

The adoption by councils of the IHRA definition would provide the basis for them refusing to hire out rooms for public meetings and events critical of Israel, of seeking to forbid public protests in their areas on the same grounds, of forbidding pro-Palestinian posters and so on.

The action plan calls for local councils to establish “taskforces” which would bring together their officials

with Zionist leaders and police to target purported antisemitism. It calls for liaison with state police over the location and permissibility of protests in council areas, which would take into account such vague and nebulous considerations as “cultural sensitivities.”

Under conditions where a number of local councils have passed motions condemning the genocide, under pressure from their constitutions, the plan demands “balanced motions.”

In other words, the transparent purpose of the whole affair was to transform councils into instruments for suppressing pro-Palestinian sentiment.

That was also made plain by a document presented to the mayors, instructing them of antisemitic symbols and slogans. The watermelon, the mayors were informed, often used at protests because it has the same colours as the Palestinian flag, was one such offensive symbol.

The slogan “free Palestine” was also antisemitic, the document declared, because it “perpetuates a one-sided view that fuels hostility and conflict.” “All eyes on Rafah,” a slogan popular earlier in the genocide referencing Israel’s mass murder in that part of Gaza, is impermissible because it is based on “the libellous insinuation that the IDF’s operation against Hamas is instead a sustained effort to harm the Palestinians residing in Rafah.”

Every single example focuses on pro-Palestinian sentiment. In a document about antisemitic symbols, such words as “swastika” and “heil Hitler” do not appear.

Much of the summit was held behind closed doors and so its content is not known. Some of the featured speakers and guests, however, were among the most inappropriate that could be imagined for a summit opposing antisemitism or bigotry.

Jeff Schoep was given a central place in the conference. For 25 years, Schoep led the National Socialist Movement, the largest Nazi organisation in America. In 2019, he declared that he was no longer a Nazi, and rapidly became a self-styled expert on “deradicalisation” and “countering extremism,” partnering with US government agencies, as well as Zionist organisations.

Some anti-fascist activists have questioned Schoep’s transformation, noting that it coincided with a massive lawsuit he was facing over his role in organising the fascistic 2017 rampage in Charlottesville.

Schoep was apparently given an entire panel at the conference. He was in conversation with Mubin Shaikh, a former Islamist Jihadi who became an agent of Canadian intelligence.

Nova Peris was also prominently advertised on the conference website. Peris, a past Olympian and former Labor Party senator, has become one of the most strident advocates of the Israeli state, alongside several other upper middle-class Indigenous leaders. Last July, the *National Indigenous Times* published a screenshot, which it said showed Peris retweeting an X post that described Muslims as “Satan worshipping cockroaches that need to be eradicated.”

As the anti-Zionist Jewish Council of Australia correctly noted, the mayors’ summit was effectively a “far-right” event. It stated: “This isn’t a genuine effort to fight antisemitism. It’s a political junket designed to push a one-sided, pro-Israel agenda and silence criticism of Israel’s genocidal war on Palestinians by conflating it with antisemitism.”

The confluence between Zionist and far-right forces was displayed in Sydney on Sunday. A small pro-Palestinian event, involving paddle-boarding at Bondi Beach, was met by a mob waving Israeli and Australian flags. The mob shouted racist slogans, including “shove your Palestine up your ass,” “off our beach” and “go back to Lakemba,” a suburb with a large Middle-Eastern and Islamic population.

Such slogans were no different to those used during the infamous 2005 Cronulla Riot, involving far-right forces who launched a virtual pogrom targeting people who appeared to be Middle Eastern.

The mayors’ summit was attended by many Labor Party local government leaders. Labor’s federal Defence Minister Richard Marles sent a video message, hailing its efforts, as did former Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Several mayors and councils refused to participate, pointing to the politically-motivated character of the gathering. That decision was undoubtedly a reflection of the widespread and growing popular hostility to the genocide and to the censorship activities of the Zionists.



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