

Australian establishment uses Kirk assassination to attack left-wing opposition

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13 September 2025

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination of Charlie Kirk on Wednesday, leaders of Australia's political and media establishment have rushed to eulogize the far-right agitator and to mourn his demise.

In the US, Kirk is being transformed into a martyr of the fascistic MAGA movement. US President Donald Trump is using the killing, the motives of which remain entirely unclear, to further normalise the extreme right within the political establishment and to demonise left-wing opposition.

Significantly, the same basic aims underlie the response in Australia. But whereas in the US this campaign is led by the openly fascistic Trump, who is attempting to overturn the Constitution and establish a dictatorship, in Australia it is being presided over by a Labor government.

The tone was set by Australia's ambassador to the US, former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Kirk's death was "deeply distressing" and "My thoughts, and those of all Australians, are with his family and loved ones."

As many people on social media have commented, the vast majority of Australians had no idea who Kirk was until his death.

Rudd's statement said nothing about Kirk's politics. As the WSWS noted, Kirk was a politically foul individual, whose agitation centred on the demonisation of minorities, particularly African Americans and transgender people, the defence of state violence domestically and frothing support for imperialist war.

Not a single Labor leader has differentiated themselves from Kirk's fascist politics or expressed a critical word. "I think the world is shocked by such an event and my heart goes out to Mr Kirk's family and to all those who will be grieving today in the United States," current Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared.

Albanese has not once expressed such sentiments in relation to a Palestinian killed by Israel in the offensive against Gaza that his government continues to support

politically, diplomatically and materially.

In a radio interview yesterday, Albanese introduced a theme that has been taken up by the most right-wing sections of the press. Albanese warned of a "polarisation of politics," which he claimed was fuelled by social media and "pushes people towards extremes, whether at the left or the right, and that's not a good thing here in Australia."

Albanese referenced his government's collaboration with right-wing representatives of the opposition Liberal-National Coalition as a model to be emulated. And he declared that "Political issues should be dealt with in the way that we dealt with them on May 3," i.e., the last Australian federal election.

The thinly-veiled message, when nothing was known about the motives of Kirk's assassin or even their identity, was that political violence was an outcome of strident political speech. The only permissible participation in politics was within the framework of the tightly-controlled and anti-democratic electoral system, dominated by the major parties.

What was implicit in Albanese's statements has been made explicit, in a slew of press comments glorifying Kirk and declaring that his murder requires a state crackdown on left-wing opposition.

The Murdoch media has led the charge. In a bizarre essay this morning, the *Australian's* foreign editor Greg Sheridan presented Kirk as the embodiment of American democracy, depicting his death as the "downfall" of values fought for by Abraham Lincoln and other world-historic figures.

Sheridan did not mention that Kirk was an opponent of civil rights legislation and had helped organise the mobilisation that ended in the January 6, 2021 attempt to overthrow democracy and install Trump as a dictator.

The far-right agitator, Sheridan wrote, "was absurdly handsome, gifted in fluency, smart as heck, sometimes too

tricky, sometimes a bit extreme, but he wanted to talk and listen to people.”

Having prettified Kirk, Sheridan warned that the “activist and far left” were “lost in identity politics hatreds, critical theory mind warps, postmodern nihilism, exhaustion of spirit, a frenetic search for life’s meaning in the wretched reaches of political extremism, and a kind of spiritual emptiness.”

Sheridan included some criticisms of MAGA violence, but they had the character of disclaimers. What he wrote is not all that different to how Kirk and others of that far-right milieu would rant about “the left.”

The most open call for repression was made in an *Australian* comment by former Coalition Treasurer Josh Frydenberg. An ardent Zionist, who has denounced opponents of Israel’s genocide as antisemites for two years, Frydenberg did not mention Kirk’s unabashed Jew-hatred. Kirk made classic antisemitic statements, such as declaring that “Jews control... the colleges, the nonprofits, the movies, Hollywood, all of it.”

Instead of mentioning that record, Frydenberg favourably cited Kirk’s own declarations that “assassination culture is spreading on the left.”

Frydenberg repeated entirely false and misleading claims of a wave of antisemitism in Australia over the past two years. In an extended article, there was much that was superfluous, but boiled down to its essence, Frydenberg was insisting that the state must forcefully suppress mass opposition to Israel’s genocide.

For instance, Frydenberg wrote: “When I interviewed Anthony Albanese for my Sky News documentary ‘Never Again: The Fight Against Antisemitism,’ he lamented the pro-Palestinian protesters who were camped outside his electorate office harassing his staff and preventing them from serving constituents.”

Frydenberg continued, “[I] thought to myself: you are the Prime Minister, if you won’t do something about it what hope do the rest of us have?” He had the same mental process, when vice-chancellors failed to disperse pro-Palestinian encampments on university campuses with sufficient speed.

The conclusion was that “We need leaders who don’t just want the job but want to do the job. They have the powers, they just need the will to exercise it.”

The protest events Frydenberg was referencing were completely peaceful, as has been the anti-genocide movement more broadly. There is simply no factual basis on which to claim such protests are associated with or fuel “political violence.”

Instead, it is the state that has frequently resorted to violence, including with repeated attempts by Labor governments to ban the protests and aggressive police deployments.

The argument that political free speech is impermissible, because its exercise is equivalent to or could lead to violence is an argument for a dictatorship in which no opposition is allowed to be expressed.

In the reaction to Kirk’s death, several trends in official politics come together. The attempt to vilify and demonise mass opposition, especially to the genocide, goes hand in hand with the normalisation of far-right and fascistic politics. Both tendencies were represented by Kirk himself, who was both a supporter of Israel’s persecution of the Palestinians and an antisemite.

As they seek to shutdown avowedly anti-racist pro-Palestinian protests, the Australian ruling elite has cultivated a far-right milieu, where racism is rampant. Labor has scapegoated immigrants for a social crisis caused by its own pro-business policies, contributing to an environment in which the largest right-wing, anti-immigrant protests in years were held last month.

Those protests were effectively led by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Network, whose members in Melbourne violently besieged Indigenous activists. In the aftermath of the far-right violence, Albanese declared that there were “good people” in the far-right mobs. That was the exact same line as used by Trump in 2017, when fascists rampaged in Charlottesville and murdered a counter-protester.

The fact that it is a Labor government that is eulogising the fascist Kirk, while attacking left-wing opposition, underscores the reality that Trump is not an aberration. His fascistic program coincides with the agenda of militarism and austerity of the entire ruling elite, under conditions of a deep-going crisis of global capitalism.



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