

New Zealand government glorifies US fascist Charlie Kirk

Tom Peters

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New Zealand's deputy prime minister David Seymour, leader of the far-right ACT Party, took to social media on September 11 to glorify the fascistic demagogue and prominent Trump supporter Charlie Kirk, who was assassinated at Utah Valley University.

Seymour claimed that Kirk stood for “the free exchange of ideas, the freedom to speak and the freedom to receive ideas so we can all work towards a better understanding together.” Seymour said Kirk’s “legacy” would be “greater understanding of the value of free speech and why it is not violence.”

The right-wing nationalist NZ First Party leader Winston Peters, the foreign minister in the National Party-led coalition government, similarly wrote that Kirk “stood for freedom of speech and especially fought for the right of others to express theirs—even if he disagreed. The essence of democracy is under threat around the world and we must do everything we can to protect it.”

Like capitalist governments in the US, Europe and Australia, Seymour and Peters have gone far beyond simply condemning Kirk’s killing and expressing condolences for his family. They are seeking to make him a “martyr” in order to legitimise his extreme right-wing, racist and bigoted views.

The portrayal of Kirk as a paragon of non-violence, mutual understanding and civilised debate is a fraud. The founder of the far-right Turning Point organisation, Kirk was a fervent cheer-leader of the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza, an anti-transgender bigot and opponent of abortion rights, and a proponent of the Great Replacement theory. According to this racist conspiracy theory, non-white immigrants are being deliberately brought in by Jewish elites to “replace” the white population.

The Great Replacement theory was central to the

manifesto of Brenton Tarrant, the fascist gunman who massacred 51 Muslims in Christchurch in 2019, in New Zealand’s deadliest mass shooting. Many of Kirk’s statements would not be out of place in Tarrant’s manifesto, including his September 8 social media post: “Islam is the sword the left is using to slit the throat of America.”

In the US, the Trump administration is exploiting Kirk’s assassination to speed up the establishment of a dictatorial regime that will suppress all opposition. Trump’s fascist advisor Stephen Miller has labelled left-wing organisations as “domestic terrorists” that must be “dismantled.” The ruling class knows that its agenda of world war, genocide and a drastic reduction in US workers’ living standards cannot be imposed democratically.

In New Zealand, the glorification of Kirk is bound up with efforts to shift official politics even further to the right and to align the country more closely with the US.

The National Party-led government—in which ACT and NZ First play a major role—is extremely concerned about ongoing mass protests against the Gaza genocide, and widespread opposition in the working class to its brutal cuts to health, education and other social programs. It is seeking to scapegoat immigrants and minorities for the worsening social crisis and to create new mechanisms for the repression of socialist, left-wing and anti-war organisations.

At NZ First’s annual conference, held on September 7, Peters delivered a tirade which closely resembled speeches by Trump and MAGA fascists like Kirk. He described NZ First as the country’s “only true nationalist party,” which was leading a “war on woke” against “global cultural Marxist influences ruining the economic, social life, and security of this country.”

Peters, who has a long record of promoting anti-

Asian and anti-Muslim bigotry, asserted that many people were “fearful” and “feel at risk” from immigrants who were “transforming cities, changing cultures” and who “don’t salute our flag, don’t honour the values of our country.” He demanded that all new migrants be made to sign a “‘Kiwi values document,’ giving a commitment to respect our country and our culture.”

Like Trump, ACT and NZ First have also inflamed divisions by exploiting widespread hostility towards the identity politics promoted by Labour and its allies. The parties falsely claim that affirmative action policies and handouts to indigenous Māori tribal businesses have given Māori a privileged status. In fact, the vast majority of Māori are among the most exploited members of the working class.

No one in the political establishment has objected to Seymour and Peters’ fawning praise for Kirk. The opposition Labour Party and the Greens reportedly blocked an attempt by Seymour to put a motion in parliament to honour Kirk, but neither party made any public statement on the issue.

Notably, Labour governments in Britain and Australia have joined hands with the far-right in hailing Kirk as a martyr. Both governments are implementing draconian anti-immigrant measures and have sought to criminalise protests against the Gaza genocide.

New Zealand’s corporate media has reported on some of Kirk’s far-right positions, but has remained silent on ACT and NZ First’s misrepresentation of Kirk as an innocuous debater.

The Platform podcast, which promotes both far-right parties, hailed Kirk as “a shining light in the movement for civilised, rational debate and respectful dialogue in an increasingly polarised world.” The Platform’s X account is seeking to foment a witch-hunt, calling on its followers to report “any NZ public servants, academics, or educators celebrating the assassination of Charlie Kirk.”

The pro-Labour Party *Daily Blog* editor Martyn Bradbury published a brief statement on September 11 saying Kirk’s positions were “deeply damaging” and that “the backlash his assassination will launch could dangerously spark something dark within the American Psyche.”

Three days later, however, Bradbury posted an article with the headline “Mass immigration is killing NZ,”

which directly echoed the “great replacement” rhetoric of Kirk and NZ First. He stated that the government was letting in too many “mostly-young workers, from India, China, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Fiji and South Africa,” leading to “intense cultural, political and social friction.” Bradbury demanded a five-year halt on all immigration and incentives for people to have more children to boost “our own population.”

The Labour Party and the Greens are complicit in fomenting these poisonous views. Both parties formed a coalition government with NZ First in 2017. Labour’s then-prime minister Jacinda Ardern made Winston Peters deputy prime minister and foreign minister. Her government adopted NZ First’s proposals for a crackdown on immigration. It also strengthened NZ’s alliance with the US during the first Trump administration, supporting the US-led militarisation of the Pacific in preparation for war against China.

The history of the past century demonstrates that fascism can only be stopped by a movement of the working class, based on a socialist and internationalist program. This involves a political struggle against all capitalist parties, including Labour and its allies, which are moving rapidly to the right.



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