

New Zealand government smears “far left” and anti-genocide protests as “violent”

Tom Peters
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New Zealand’s Foreign Minister Winston Peters has seized on recent incidents, including the breaking of a window at his house, to ramp up his campaign to delegitimize protests against the Gaza genocide and to smear all left-wing political opposition.

On October 6, a window was smashed at Peters’ house in Auckland and shortly afterwards a 29-year-old man was arrested and charged with burglary. The man, who has been given name suppression by the court, has pleaded not guilty. Within hours of the incident, before anything had been made public about the alleged perpetrator, Peters posted on X: “This is the type of violent hate-filled behaviour we warned about in the past few days about the radical left.”

Without providing any evidence, he blamed the act of vandalism on “protesters, political bloggers, and MPs alike encouraging this behaviour, posting politician’s [sic] home addresses online, and acting with pure ignorance and extremism.”

Speaking to the *New Zealand Herald* the next day, Peters singled out Green Party co-leader Chlöe Swarbrick, calling her “complicit in the extreme.” The only “evidence” he gave was that Swarbrick had spoken publicly alongside a protest organiser who had called for pro-Palestine demonstrations outside Peters’ house—an activity which is currently legal.

Swarbrick rejected the accusation that she had incited the breaking of Peters’ window. The accused man has stated, through his lawyer, that he was not part of a protest held outside the minister’s house that evening.

Peters has been denounced at rallies attended by thousands up and down the country since his speech at the UN whitewashing Israel’s genocide in Gaza. He has since hailed US president Donald Trump’s so-called “peace plan,” a blueprint for the colonial takeover of the Gaza Strip and the continued oppression of the Palestinian people.

Peters’ right-wing nationalist New Zealand First Party and the far-right ACT Party—which both play a major role in the National Party-led coalition government—have repeatedly made hysterical and unsubstantiated accusations that anti-genocide protesters are promoting “violence” and “anti-semitism.”

The government is taking its cue from the US Trump administration, which has exploited the assassination of the fascist agitator Charlie Kirk to label all anti-fascist opposition as “violent extremism” and “terrorism.” In response to mass opposition to war, genocide and social inequality, Trump is deploying the military into American cities in what is an unfolding coup aimed at establishing a dictatorship.

While New Zealand’s ruling class has not yet gone this far, the same political dynamic is at work. The government is responding to the profound economic crisis by implementing brutal austerity measures that are driving thousands into poverty, while boosting funding for the military in preparation to join US-led imperialist wars. This agenda cannot be imposed democratically; pretexts must therefore be found, or concocted, to justify the suppression of opposition.

One such pretext was supplied by the *Daily Blog*, a nationalist publication which supports the Greens and the Labour Party.

On October 5, the day before Peters’ window was broken, the blog’s editor Martyn Bradbury published an article encouraging people to shout “Zionist coward” and “war criminal” if they saw members of the government in the street. He added: “if you are serving a National, ACT and NZF MP food, make sure you spit in that food.”

This provocative statement was a gift to the right-wing government. It was immediately exploited by Peters to accuse “the far left” of being “violent and divisive.”

“We have seen the rise of political violence around the world and this type of horrendous encouragement of

people to act against politicians in this way is dangerous. It is only a small step from justifying spitting in someone's food to justifying something more violent," Peters wrote on X.

The foreign minister's statements were echoed by the far-right *Platform* podcast, whose presenter Michael Laws declared that the Green Party's supporters, including pro-Palestinian protesters, would "eventually go into something more violent than they are at the moment—it's just inevitable."

The hypocrisy of such statements is glaring. In addition to whitewashing the mass murder of Palestinians and backing the imperialist carve-up of the Middle East, NZ First has stoked fascistic campaigns within New Zealand.

A few months ago, NZ First and the *Platform* fomented a vile, homophobic witch hunt against Green MP Benjamin Doyle, who Peters accused, without a shred of evidence, of being a sex criminal and a danger to children. Doyle resigned from parliament last month after receiving an avalanche of death threats.

NZ First has repeatedly fuelled racism and xenophobia, especially against immigrants from China, India and Muslim countries. At the party's convention last month, Peters ranted that "people feel at risk" because too many migrants "don't salute our flag, don't honour the values of our country, don't respect the people living here, don't respect the right to have our own religion and freedom of speech."

NZ First is widely despised—it received just 6 percent of the vote in the 2023 election—but the party has been promoted for years by the entire capitalist political establishment. This includes the Green Party, which joined a coalition government with Labour and NZ First from 2017 to 2020. That government, led by Jacinda Ardern, adopted NZ First's anti-immigrant policies and strengthened New Zealand's alliance with the US as it prepared for war against China.

The Labour-Greens-NZ First coalition was embraced by the *Daily Blog*, which echoed NZ First's anti-immigrant rhetoric and its demonisation of China. Far from being "left-wing" or "Marxist," the blog's Martyn Bradbury has repeatedly attacked the Socialist Equality Group—accusing it of "possible treason" and calling for it to be investigated by the intelligence agencies—because of its exposure of the *Daily Blog's* anti-China war propaganda.

The current government, meanwhile, is taking steps to restrict the right to protest, including a proposal to ban demonstrations "near" private residences of MPs, judges

and other public officials. The New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties points out that the Bill could be used to stop protests outside "an embassy including an ambassador's residence" or even at parliament grounds, which is "near" apartments occupied by politicians.

With the support of the opposition Labour Party, the government is seeking to pass laws against "foreign interference," which could also be used to criminalise protests if they are deemed to be "on behalf of a foreign power" and harmful to New Zealand's "protected interests."

Consultation is underway on potential changes to the Terrorism Suppression Act, which could lead to people being charged with a criminal offence if they express any support for designated "terrorist" organisations. Britain's Labour government has used similar laws to arrest hundreds of peaceful anti-genocide protesters.

The ruling elite's support for genocide and imperialist wars, and its attacks on living standards and democratic rights at home, must be opposed. But this cannot be done through individualistic actions such as breaking windows or spitting in politicians' food—impotent and stupid outbursts which only play into the hands of the state and provide a pretext for repression.

Two years of mass, global protests, which have failed to stop the Gaza genocide, have also demonstrated the futility of appealing to capitalist governments to change course.

The only force capable of ending war and dictatorship is the working class, mobilised in an organised, global industrial and political movement, armed with a socialist perspective—in opposition to all the capitalist parties, including Labour and the Greens. The urgent task facing workers and youth is to fight to build the necessary socialist and internationalist leadership: Join the Socialist Equality Group.



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