

Australian protests against fascism and the far-right

Our reporters
20 October 2025

Rallies were held around Australia on Sunday to oppose the rise of the far right. Organised as counter-protests to the anti-immigrant “March for Australia,” they drew thousands in major cities across the country, especially young people.

The first “March for Australia,” held on August 31, was the largest far-right mobilisation in the country in years, if not decades. The marches, centrally organised and planned by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Network (NSN), targeted immigrants and refugees as the source of all social problems.

The numbers at last Sunday’s marches were significantly lower. In Sydney, where the first march drew around 15,000, police estimated 5,000 people attended.

In Melbourne, counter-protesters far outnumbered the “March for Australia” and were attacked by a massive police deployment.

The widespread hostility to the NSN and exposures of their central role in the first “March for Australia” protests likely contributed to the smaller turnout. The speakers repeated the same line as at the first rallies, hysterically denouncing “foreigners” for all social problems. They were attended primarily by older layers of the population.

The organisers of the counter-protests, including pseudo-left groups such as Socialist Alternative, have sought to channel opposition back behind the Labor government and the official political establishment. The Sydney counter-protest was endorsed by both Young Labor and the Young Greens.

In reality, Labor is centrally responsible for the growth of the far-right. It is scapegoating immigrants and refugees for the housing and social crisis. And by inflicting social pain and the pro-business agenda it is creating the conditions for far-right forces to make an appeal.

Labor is also overseeing a far-reaching onslaught on basic democratic rights, centred on its attempts to criminalise mass opposition to the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and its own complicity.

The assault on the right to protest was on display in Melbourne. Police have accused some members of the counter-protest of initiating violent clashes. Footage posted to social media, however, shows Victoria Police officers indiscriminately deploying capsicum spray at crowds of retreating protesters. Police also used flashbang grenades and

there are reports of at least one protester being shot with a rubber bullet.

After the rally, Victoria Police Commander Wayne Cheeseman gave a frothing press conference, denouncing purported “left-wing” violence. Prominent comments in the press, including the *Melbourne Age* have demanded the curtailment or abolition of the right to protest.

That underscores the point raised by WSWS and Socialist Equality Party campaigners at the counter-protests. We explained that the rise of the far-right, as well as growing authoritarianism by governments of all stripes, is the response of the ruling elite to mounting social and political opposition amid a breakdown of capitalism.

The fight against fascism requires the independent mobilisation of the working class, in opposition to the entire political establishment, including the Labor governments, based on a socialist program.

WSWS reporters spoke to some of those in attendance.

Josie and **Jas**, both students at the University of Melbourne, attended the counter-protest in Melbourne. Josie said, “We’ve come today because we’ve noticed a very scary uptick in fascism in this country. I think it’s important to try and combat that in any way I can.”

Referring to Albanese’s remarks that there were “good people” in the first March for Australia, Josie said: “I think it’s disgusting. It reminds me of what Trump said about Charlottesville many years ago. It’s frightening that a leader who is supposedly left-wing could say the sort of thing that Trump, a fascist, did. All of Albanese’s comments on the first March for Australia were disgusting. It just showed the complicity of the Labor Party and their willingness to use this as a pillar for their own policies.”

Jas added, “And he has failed to legitimise us and our protests in the same way.”

Alec, a delivery driver, said there is “a general shift towards more conservative politics all over the world. I’m from New Zealand, and the same thing is happening there. But I think the intentions of people who go to anti-immigration marches are misplaced on immigration, because there is the problem of wealth inequality.”

On the situation in the US, he noted, “There’s a lot of anger

on the part of the American people, but there's a lot of coverage of people associated with the right. I don't necessarily think that is the majority. It's unfortunate how much notice they [the March for Australia] get here in the media."

Lain, a floristry student said, "It's important to fight back against fascism. I think the world is slowly headed towards end-stage fascism, especially with the US. There are so many similarities between Trump and Hitler and their leadership. And because the US is so powerful, I feel like Australia is following suit. That makes these people think that they can spread their hate."

Harry, a writer who works in renewables, told the WSWs, "We have seen for a few years now the rise globally of fascism and far right politics, which our politicians at best are not doing anything to fight and at worst actively encouraging both the reaction and inaction. And so it's up to just ordinary people to get out on the street and stand up against that. We're only going to see it get worse in the years to come if we don't do anything about it."

Asked why this is happening, Harry continued: "Over the last 10 or 20 years we've seen more entrenched neoliberal policies, more inequality and inequity through more rampant capitalism. If people are desperate and in desperate times, fascists and opportunists seize upon that, and when our leaders and politicians don't do anything to push back against that, it creates the breeding ground for the worst far-right protagonists to take advantage of that."

"As things get worse with the climate, we have more climate change refugees, and the way the economy works now is to exacerbate the effects of that. There's going to be a tipping point. It appears to me that the politicians are poised to put all the blame on immigrants or on refugees rather than fixing up the mess that they've helped create. We can't turn against each other. We need to push back against the far right and the fascists who try to turn us against each other."

On Labor, Harry said: "They've shifted further and further to the right. Over the last 20 or 30 years, Labor, which was meant to be a party of the workers, has followed that right-wing vote more and more. The Albanese government is the most disappointing government in my lifetime, especially in the wake of the last federal election. They're entrenching the problems. Look what happened with the environment. Labor is blatantly in the pocket of the fossil fuel lobby."

At Sydney's counter-demonstration, **Russell**, a student from the University of Technology Sydney, came to the rally "because I'm an immigrant myself. A lot of my Southeast Asian friends, they've been hassled, bashed by racists in the past couple of years since COVID, and I feel like it is my moral duty to stand up and fight, especially as an immigrant myself."

On Albanese's visit to Trump in Washington, Russell said of the prime minister, "He's a hypocrite. You can't claim to be on the side of labour, while at the same time meeting and shaking hands with the same man who seeks to destroy the

labour movement."

He continued: "[New South Wales Labor Premier] Chris Minns tried to pass a law in parliament to essentially ban these sorts of protests under the guise of combating 'antisemitism.'"

Artemis, a student, said, "I think that as things get worse across the world, we're heading probably towards another depression. You either look at the true face of what is happening, and that's global capital, or you can scapegoat. You can hide behind immigrants and scapegoating other races."

Artemis said that in the US, "the liberal world order has been proven to be a farce. Palestine is the greatest failure of liberal politics that I think has ever been seen. The easiest turn is towards fascism, towards racism, and that is the epitome of Trump's politics. Racism and fascism have always been tools of capital. The bounty of imperialism no longer works. You see it in Europe, as austerity takes away social safety nets. People become more uncomfortable. That's when you have to put the boot on."

"Thirty percent of the US population voted for Donald Trump—it's not the majority. I think that properly messaged socialism is the majority view. People like being fair, people like feeling accomplished, and I think that socialism is the best way to do that. But you have had the demonisation of socialism through the Red Scare and through the Cold War."

Referring to the No Kings demonstrations in the US, Artemis said, "This is a massive upswelling and everyone who is fighting in the front lines there is doing their solemn duty. Whatever goes on in the US, you cannot give up. You have to keep fighting. It is awe-inspiring, seeing the crowds. It's easy to go to one protest, shout a bunch, and then go home. The goal cannot be just that. The goal has to be to continue the fight. It has to stay determined, to get organised, to fight as a continuous movement, and not just once."



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