

Reactionary shooting in Sydney kills 15 people

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The mass shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach yesterday evening, targeting a Jewish religious festival, has resulted in the deaths of at least 15 people and injuries to 42 people, some of whom are in critical condition. One of the alleged shooters has also been killed.

From what the police and intelligence agencies have so far reported, the shootings were carried out by a father, Sajid Akram, 50, and son, Naveed Akram, 24, from Sydney's working-class western suburbs, using rifles for which the father had held licences for a decade. The father was reportedly shot dead by police and the son is in a critical condition in hospital. No evidence has been suggested by the police of any wider involvement.

Those killed ranged in age from 10 to 87, including a young girl, a Holocaust survivor and a rabbi. The target was evidently a "Chanukah by the Sea" event for children that was scheduled to take place at a beachside playground from 5 p.m., and had begun, marking the start of the eight-day Rabbinic Jewish festival of lights.

While the motives of the alleged shooters remain to be determined, this is a reactionary and tragic event. Jewish people and their children living in Australia bear no responsibility for the ongoing slaughter by the Israeli Zionist regime in Gaza and the occupied West Bank of Palestine. In fact, many Jewish people have joined the anti-genocide demonstrations, in Australia and globally, as part of the wider disgust and outrage.

Police have remained tight-lipped about the two suspects, refusing to discuss anything about their motives, while saying that one was known to police and the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), and previously suspected of links to an Islamic State group.

As shown on widely broadcast video footage, further deaths were prevented, in part, by a 43-year-old fruit shop owner, Ahmed Al Ahmed, who crept up on a shooter and managed to wrest a rifle from him.

New South Wales (NSW) Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said two "basic" explosive devices were found in a car at the Bondi Beach scene and were removed by bomb

squad specialists.

But before anything was known, or reported by the police, about the motivations of the two men, the attack was seized upon by the Australian Labor government, its international counterparts and the corporate media, to conflate it with the mass, often weekly, protests in Australia against the Gaza genocide and to demand further measures to outlaw anti-genocide and other political dissent.

This mass shooting only plays into the hands of those responsible for the historic crimes in Palestine, including the Australian and other Western governments that have backed and armed the Netanyahu regime and slandered and suppressed anti-genocide protests, falsely accusing them of antisemitism. In fact, Israel does not speak for the Jewish people, a lie promoted by the Israeli government and the imperialist powers that have backed the genocide in Gaza.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and NSW Premier Chris Minns last night declared their intent to take what Minns described as "massive" action to react to the shootings, including by large police mobilisations and new legislation, adding to the already extensive battery of "hate crime" and "terrorism" laws.

For more than two years, the NSW Labor government has repeatedly sought to have peaceful pro-Palestinian demonstrations banned.

Albanese described the shooting as an "act of evil antisemitism, terrorism that has struck the heart of our nation." He convened a meeting of the National Security Committee, which includes leading cabinet members and police, intelligence and military chiefs.

He then held a media conference, flanked by ASIO chief Mike Burgess and Australian Federal Police Acting Deputy Commissioner for National Security Nigel Ryan, to pledge that he would "eradicate" this kind of "hate, violence, and terrorism." He declared: "This is a targeted attack on Jewish Australians."

At another media conference this morning, Albanese went further, vowing to "stamp out" the "scourge" of antisemitism, doing "whatever is necessary," including a

legislative response. “There is no place for this hate violence and terrorism in our nation,” he said. “Let me be clear, we will eradicate it.”

Last night, the Minns state Labor government issued a terrorist declaration. That activated sweeping police and ASIO powers, including to stop, search and detain persons and vehicles in designated areas, use lethal force, detain and interrogate people without charge, and conduct covert entry, search and surveillance operations.

Using these powers, police gave a taste of what this means by conducting violent raids on two residences in south-west Sydney linked to the two suspects. At the family’s Bonnyrigg home, heavily armed police, backed by a Bearcat armoured vehicle and under police helicopter floodlights, forced individuals to walk out with their arms raised and sit on the ground.

The Albanese government’s Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Jillian Segal, a Zionist lobbyist, sought to link the shootings to the large anti-genocide protests, from an initial one at the Sydney Opera House on October 9, 2023, to the mass march, joined by some 300,000 people, across the Sydney Harbour Bridge this August 3.

This rhetoric slanders the hundreds of thousands of people who have joined the Gaza demonstrations against Israeli atrocities and mass murder, and blames the protesters for the shootings. Segal called for even more repressive action by the Labor governments, which have repeatedly denounced the protests and sought to halt them.

Segal’s diatribe matched that of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Overnight he accused the Albanese government of doing nothing to stop the alleged spread of antisemitism in Australia. He said it had “replaced weakness with weakness.”

Netanyahu is a war criminal whose regime has killed more than 60,000 people in Gaza over the past two years, systematically violating international humanitarian law and committing crimes against humanity, backed and protected by the United States and other major capitalist powers.

US President Donald Trump and European government leaders, such as the UK’s Keir Starmer, who have armed, financed, politically protected and diplomatically normalised Israel’s actions, also sought to conflate the shootings with opposition to the genocide. “That was an antisemitic attack, obviously,” Trump told the media.

Likewise, media outlets internationally presented Australia as hosting a plague of antisemitism. The Murdoch media’s *Australian* was typical. The newspaper’s chief international correspondent Cameron Stewart claimed that pro-Palestinian activists should “hang their heads in shame.” He insisted: “We don’t yet know the motivations or details of who committed this horrible crime, but this massacre will put

Australia on the world map as a hotbed of anti-Semitic terror.”

It must be recalled that over the past two years, Australian governments and authorities have inflated and misclassified incidents, including peaceful anti-genocide protests, as “antisemitic” to criminalise and suppress pro-Palestine dissent and expand police powers. The NSW police later admitted these figures contained false or misleading entries.

Many people in Australia are shocked and distressed by what has happened at Bondi Beach, which is known as a place that attracts tourists and visitors from around the world. This is the worst mass shooting in the country since a mentally ill man killed 35 people at Port Arthur, south of Hobart, in 1996.

But efforts are being made to twist and manipulate these sentiments to demonise opposition to the continuing mass killings, displacement and oppression of Palestinians, and to support police-state measures that will be used more broadly against all forms of political dissent under conditions of staggering social inequality, austerity and US-led war preparations.

Under these conditions, it is essential that workers and young people reject ethnic division and scapegoating, defend Jewish, Islamic and other targeted communities, and oppose the assault on basic democratic rights and the plunge toward war.

Reactionary antagonisms are being generated and magnified by the crisis of global capitalism and imperialist interventions, such as the Gaza genocide and the underlying US drive to dominate the Middle East. The only solution is the building of a unified international working-class movement for socialism to expropriate the oligarchs and ruling elites that profit from war, repression and division.



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