

Australian governments, media target anti-genocide protests over Bondi Beach shooting

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The gunning down of innocent, predominantly Jewish people at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Sunday evening is being seized upon by the capitalist media and governments to demand the suppression of all opposition to the ongoing US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

With 24 victims still in hospital—six in critical conditions—the death toll from the shooting stands at 15. Those killed include a 10-year-old girl named publicly only as Matilda, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, Alexander Kleytman, a local rabbi, Eli Schlanger, and a young French citizen, Dan Elkayam.

It is now clear from the location, planning and footage that the target of the two alleged gunmen, Sajid Akram, 50, and his son, Naveed Akram, 24, was a “Chanukah by the Sea” event for children at a beachside playground, marking the start of the eight-day Rabbinic Jewish festival of lights. Hundreds of children, their carers and volunteers, many elderly, were taking part in the festival.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has unequivocally condemned this attack, stating yesterday that 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 massive, often weekly anti-genocide demonstrations in Australia, as part of the wider disgust and outrage.

Yet, those responsible for the continuing carnage in Gaza, above all the Israeli government and its backers, are seeking to exploit this reactionary and tragic killing spree to insist that all demonstrations and statements of protest against the genocide must be shut down.

Internationally, this is being spearheaded by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, in a series of incendiary statements, accused the Australian Labor government of not going far enough to ban or prevent anti-genocide protests. He charged Prime Minister Anthony Albanese with replacing “weakness with weakness and appeasement with more appeasement” of antisemitism.

“You did nothing to curb the cancer cells that were

growing inside your country. You took no action,” Netanyahu said during an Israeli government meeting on Sunday. “You let the disease spread, and the result is the horrific attacks on Jews we saw today.”

In reality, the Albanese Labor government, along with all the state governments and the media, have been waging a relentless campaign and implementing far-reaching hate speech laws in a bid to stamp out anti-genocide protests, which have been among the largest per capita and most sustained globally.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar made the demand for political censorship explicit, declaring: “Calls such as ‘Globalise the Intifada,’ ‘From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will be Free,’ and ‘Death to the IDF’ are not legitimate, are not part of the freedom of speech, and inevitably lead to what we witnessed today.”

All of this is based on the lie that equates opposition to the Zionist Israeli regime and its crimes with antisemitism or anti-Jewish racism. Netanyahu and his government, however, do not represent the Jewish people, as shown by the global involvement of Jews in the mass anti-genocide demonstrations. In fact, by denouncing the anti-genocide protests as being anti-Jewish, the Zionists only help create the political conditions that can be exploited by the real antisemites, notably neo-Nazis and far-right Islamic groups such as Islamic State.

Within the Australian political establishment, one of the most blatant anti-democratic statements came from New South Wales (NSW) Premier Chris Minns, whose state Labor government has repeatedly denounced anti-genocide protests and sought to ban or prevent them over the past 18 months, including the huge 300,000-strong march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge this August 3.

Before anything was even known about the motives of the two alleged gunmen, Minns equated the shootings with the marches and online opposition to the Gaza genocide, accusing them of promoting “toxic” and “cancerous” Jewish hatred, creating an atmosphere that leads to violence.

“Wherever it is, we need to fight antisemitism,” he

declared. “It is toxic. It is cancerous within a community... We need to be clear and unambiguous that we will fight it everywhere we see it, whether it’s destructive, horrible acts of violence or chants, mottos and internet posts on the internet.”

This turns reality on its head. It is the monstrous crimes of the Zionist regime that feed and fuel actual antisemitism, particularly by its false identification of all Jews with the genocide and the decades of oppression, slaughter and removal of Palestinians.

Minns and Albanese are quickly moving to satisfy the demands of the Netanyahu regime and its backers by ramping up the already extensive array of anti-protest and other police-state measures that have been imposed in the past two decades since the declaration of the “war on terrorism.”

Within hours of the Bondi Beach shootings, Minns ordered a “massive” state police mobilisation, and issued a terrorist declaration that gave the state and federal police and intelligence agencies sweeping powers, such as to use lethal force, stop and search people, detain and interrogate them without charge, and conduct covert entry, search and surveillance operations.

Albanese convened a series of meetings of his National Security Committee and the so-called National Cabinet of federal and state leaders to launch the crackdown. So far, the main measures divulged publicly involve tightening restrictions on gun licences, after it became known that Sajid Akram had held licences for six high-powered rifles.

These measures could include limits on the number of guns an individual can own and a review of gun licences over time. Albanese also pledged extra funding for the security of Australian Jews, including for schools and other Jewish institutions.

Further moves will undoubtedly follow, with both Albanese and Minns foreshadowing fresh legislation to bolster provisions against supposed “hate speech” and protests. There is a drumbeat in the corporate media to demand far more draconian measures, always deliberately conflating anti-genocide outrage with antisemitism.

Today, for example, an editorial in the *Australian* insisted that “hateful chants such as ‘river to the sea’ and ‘globalise the intifada’ must be dealt with through prosecutions and penalties,” as recommended by Jillian Segal, the Albanese government’s Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism.

Greg Sheridan, the newspaper’s foreign editor, accused the Labor government of permitting “a squalid descent into hate-filled anti-Semitism.” He proclaimed: “This is a day on which Australia is changed forever. This moment will never be forgotten. This is a pivot point in our history.”

The *Australian* also featured a diatribe by Emeritus

Professor Greg Craven, a former vice-chancellor of the Australian Catholic University, whom Segal appointed to prepare a “report card” on how university managements had responded to alleged antisemitism since the shutting down of widespread student anti-genocide encampments last year.

Craven claimed that universities had paved the way for the Bondi Beach shootings by tolerating “vicious protests, occupations of campuses and interference of Jewish people.” Without offering a shred of evidence, he accused the managements of failing to act because “a large majority of academic staff and students have sympathies with the Left” and “large parts of the Left is anti-Semitic”—in effect calling for a massive purge of academic institutions.

The actual perpetrators of the killings on Bondi Beach—Sajid and Naveed Akram—appear to have been associated with the Islamic extremist organisation, Islamic State (IS), which is notorious for its acts of terrorism carried out under the false flag of defending Muslims and their faith.

However, the allegations being drip fed to the establishment media by anonymous police and intelligence sources—an IS flag, Naveed Akram’s past association with an Islamist group, and a trip last month to the Philippines—raise more questions than they answer. Such reports should be treated with suspicion. Naveed Akram remains in hospital under police guard after being wounded by police, while his father was killed.

Whatever the motivations of the two men, the mass shooting only plays into the hands of those responsible for the historic crimes in Palestine. To expose and combat this, workers and young people must 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.



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