

Australia: The political issues behind the Bondi Beach terrorist attack

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) unequivocally condemns the terrorist shootings of innocent people attending a “Chanukah by the Sea” event at Sydney’s Bondi Beach on December 14, marking the start of the Jewish Hanukkah festival. Among the 15 dead were a 10-year-old child, two elderly survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, a local rabbi and three others who, unarmed, courageously attempted to disarm the gunmen.

While many questions remain unanswered, the two alleged shooters—Sajid Akram and his son Naveed—were evidently motivated by the reactionary and divisive ideology of Islamic State. It blames the monstrous crimes of the Israeli regime and US imperialism in the Middle East over decades, not on capitalism, but on Jews and other “infidels,” to justify indiscriminate acts of slaughter as took place last Sunday.

The Jewish people are not responsible for the Zionist regime’s genocidal slaughter of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, nor for the wider war being waged throughout the Middle East in league with US imperialism and its allies. Thousands of Jewish people have joined the mass anti-genocide demonstrations in Australia and around the world against the atrocities in Gaza being carried out in their name.

Despite their mutual hatred, Islamic State terrorists have a great deal in common with the proponents of Zionism—both insist on a false identity of the Israeli state with Jewish people throughout the world. Benjamin Netanyahu, fallaciously claiming to represent all Jewish people, seized on the terrorist attack at Bondi Beach to demand the stamping out of all opposition to his far-right government’s barbaric war on the Palestinian people.

Netanyahu launched an extraordinary attack on the Labor government, blaming Prime Minister Anthony Albanese personally for the carnage at Bondi Beach. “You did nothing to curb the cancer cells that were growing inside your country. You took no action,” he said

on Sunday. “You let the disease spread, and the result is the horrific attacks on Jews we saw today.”

In fact, for more than two years, the Albanese government, along with state governments, the media and Zionist leaders and groups, have been waging a relentless campaign of vilification, falsely branding all opposition to the Gaza genocide as antisemitism. Along with the anti-genocide protests, academics, journalists and health workers have been targeted as well.

The state Labor government in New South Wales (NSW) has been in the forefront of ramming through far-reaching anti-democratic measures, banning so-called “hate speech” and attempting to block protests.

Netanyahu’s personal attack on Albanese is motivated by the depth of the popular opposition in Australia to his government’s crimes. Over the past two years, the anti-genocide protests have been continuous and among the largest per capita in the world. In August, 300,000 people took part in a march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge despite the frantic efforts of NSW Premier Chris Minns and the police to ban it.

Netanyahu’s comments, which have been echoed by former Liberal-National Coalition Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and other Zionist leaders, have created a political crisis around Albanese. At a press conference yesterday, Albanese offered what amounted to an abject apology for failing to do more to protect Jews and stamp out antisemitism—the code word for any criticism of the Israeli state.

Standing alongside his government’s antisemitism special envoy, Jillian Segal, a longstanding Zionist lobbyist, Albanese promised to implement her recommendations in full. These include a purge of the media, universities and schools, including through the blocking of research grants and a revision of curricula and courses, to ensure the predominance of Zionist propaganda.

Minns is convening an emergency session of the NSW parliament to pass hastily drafted legislation to grant the police extensive powers to ban anti-genocide and other political slogans, protests and demonstrations, further overturning basic democratic rights.

Both Albanese and Minns are also promising tougher gun laws. No answers have been provided, however, to the obvious question: How was it that Sajid Akram was able to get a gun licence in 2023 and purchase six rifles and shotguns, just four years after his son had been subject to investigation by ASIO, the domestic intelligence agency, for his association with organisations with Islamic State connections?

For more than two decades since the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, successive governments have vastly expanded intelligence and police resources and powers devoted to the so-called “war on terror.” The claim by ASIO and the police that the Akrams simply went off the radar for six years, even though they spent last month in the southern Philippines, known for its Islamic extremist connections, is simply not credible. A cover-up is underway to obscure how and why the Bondi Beach shootings were able to take place.

The Bondi Beach shootings were the most violent terrorist attack ever on Australian soil. Just as September 11 was exploited by US imperialism to launch illegal wars of aggression and erect a vast police-state apparatus, so the Australian ruling class is rapidly moving to use the reactionary slaughter last Sunday for its own ends.

The US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza is part of a wider war throughout the Middle East that has been backed to the hilt by the Australian government and indeed the entire political establishment. Moreover, it is just one front in a developing global conflict that is already underway in Europe and Latin America, and is rapidly being prepared against China, as US imperialism recklessly resorts to military means to arrest its global decline.

The far-reaching legislation and measures being prepared by state and federal governments under the banner of combatting antisemitism will be used not only to ban anti-genocide protests but to suppress opposition to war and militarism more broadly. The strengthening of the police and intelligence apparatuses will be directed against the inevitable social unrest that is emerging as the burdens of war are imposed on working people. Above all, it will be targeted against working-class militants and socialists—as is happening in the United States under the fascistic Trump administration.

To expose the role of the capitalist state in the Bondi Beach shootings, a completely independent and transparent inquiry is needed. The purpose of the “full investigation,” as promised by Albanese and Minns, whether by police, a parliamentary committee or a Royal Commission, will be to cover up the truth. The 2019 Christchurch massacre in New Zealand, in which 51 people were killed by fascist gunman Brenton Tarrant, is instructive. A blanket of secrecy was thrown over what the police and intelligence agencies knew prior to the attack, despite Tarrant’s well-known links to fascist organisations in Australia and Europe.

The expansion and strengthening of the state apparatus must be opposed by the working class. The SEP calls on workers and youth to take matters into their own hands and come to the aid of Jewish people or any community that comes under racist attack. Just as we call for the establishment of rank-and-file committees in factories and workplaces to defend jobs, working conditions and safety standards, so rank-and-file committees are needed in working-class suburbs to protect basic democratic and social rights.

Such rank-and-file committees—which must be composed of workers and youth regardless of their language, religion or race—have to explicitly reject all forms of nationalism, communalism and xenophobia. In the case of the Bondi Beach shootings, communalism, whether in the form of Zionism or Islamist extremism, is utterly reactionary. Its class purpose is to strengthen the hand of the ruling class by dividing the working class, setting worker against worker, youth against youth.

In the final analysis, the eruption of poisonous ideologies based on race and religion is an expression of the acute and deepening crisis of global capitalism. The resort to war, austerity and far-right autocratic forms of rule is threatening to plunge humanity into the abyss. The defence of democratic rights in Australia and around the world is completely bound up with the struggle by the working class for a socialist future in which the resources of humanity are used to meet pressing social needs, not the corporate profits of the handful of multi-billionaires.



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