

# Australia: NSW premier, police justify violent arrests in Sydney following Bondi shootings

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A major police operation was conducted last Thursday in the middle of Liverpool, a southwestern Sydney working-class centre. It was a graphic example of the kind of repressive conditions being imposed by Australian governments, on the pretext of responding to the December 14 terrorist shootings at Bondi Beach.

New South Wales (NSW) tactical operations police dressed in military-style camouflage outfits and drawing heavy weapons pulled seven men from two cars, then handcuffed them with zip ties. Police vehicles had dangerously rammed one of the cars at a busy intersection. On Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) radio, NSW Police Deputy Commissioner David Hudson described it as a high-risk vehicle stop.

Vision from the scene showed handcuffed men face-down on the ground. Later, they were seen sitting on the footpath facing a fence as heavily armed police and riot squad officers stood over them.

Beanbag bullets were reportedly used to detain the men, aged between 18 and 24. At least one sustained an injury to the head, even though the men, who had driven hundreds of kilometres from the state of Victoria, had told police they were on their way to a short-term holiday rental property.

This operation was all based, according to police commanders, on unproven allegations that the men had similar views to the Bondi Beach gunmen who killed 15 people at a “Chanukah by the Sea” event on December 14. The police said the men might have been intending to travel to Bondi Beach, even though it is 40 kilometres from Liverpool, and one of the men had been under surveillance by ASIO, the federal domestic intelligence agency.

After holding the seven men overnight without charge, last Friday the police released them all, saying

there was no evidence to lay charges against them. The police said no weapons were found in the cars, just one knife.

As well as the deliberate display of force, the men were reportedly detained under draconian state and federal “terrorism” laws that allow police, with the consent of a magistrate, to detain people for “investigation” for up to a week without charge.

Speaking to reporters after their release, one of the men said there had been a “misunderstanding” and the group held no extremist beliefs. “We just told [police] we were here for a holiday,” he said. Another told Nine News: “They target us because we’re Muslims.”

In a video posted on Friday, one of the men showed a plaster on his head and said he had received a cut during the arrest that was “2 centimetres in.” Another man stated: “If they turned on the (police) lights we would have stopped, but they just smacked the car.” He added that he had been “bashed” during the arrest and “two of the boys got tasered.”

Despite the lack of any evidence against the men, NSW Premier Chris Minns immediately backed the police. “You can see that they’re [police] not mucking around,” he told the media. “I don’t think anyone in NSW wants them to muck around. If they perceive a threat, now and in the future, they will take immediate action.”

The police operation is a sharp warning of what Premier Minns intends with the raft of anti-democratic laws that he foreshadowed straight after the Bondi mass shootings. The legislation being rushed through parliament this week would give the state government and the police powers to ban all political demonstrations, of any kind, for three months once they had issued a terrorist alert.

Minns said the laws would also give police greater

powers to force people to remove face coverings at protests, to order them to “move on” or face arrest and to swoop on anyone carrying a flag or sign allegedly supporting a group proscribed by federal law as “terrorist.” Minns declared that the legislation would specifically outlaw the phrase “globalise the intifada,” which refers to uprisings against oppression, as “hate speech.”

“No public assemblies in a designated area will be able to be authorised, including by a court,” Minns told reporters. He boasted: “These are obviously extraordinary powers—not seen before in any jurisdiction in the country.”

As the state and federal Labor governments have done for the past two years, Minns conflated the mass anti-genocide marches in Australia, such as the 300,000-strong march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge on August 3, with antisemitism, even though thousands of Jews have joined the demonstrations, as they have internationally.

The anti-protest laws are not only seeking to outlaw demonstrations against the Gaza genocide. According to media reports, they will empower the state government and the police to issue “public assembly restriction declarations” to ban any gathering that they declare could “cause fear of harassment, intimidation or violence, or cause a risk to community safety.”

Such provisions could be used to criminalise meetings or protests expressing any political dissent, whether it be against soaring social inequality, the climate disaster, or war preparations.

Minns’ legislation, together with similar plans by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and other state and territory government leaders, will also place certain limits on gun licences. Yet Minns revealed this week that he has been involved in talks with an Israeli-linked organisation, the Community Security Group (CSG), to permit its forces to carry weapons at “Jewish events in particular.”

Minns said the CSG was already permitted to be armed at Jewish places of worship and Jewish schools. This creates an environment in which hundreds of Zionist supporters, reportedly including some ex-Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, are effectively licensed to shoot to kill.

In 2019, CSG NSW’s head of security, Matthew Meyerson, told the Jewish Communal Appeal (JCA)

that the CSG had “more than 300 volunteers across its various divisions, with hundreds training together every week.” Last week, the Victorian state Labor government gave \$900,000 to the CSG’s Victorian chapter in the wake of the Bondi attack.

The federal Labor government is also preparing to bolster already far-reaching “hate speech” laws that his government pushed through in February, and create new powers to cancel or reject visas of people who spread “hate and division.” It plans to implement far-reaching measures to promote Zionist propaganda under the guise of combatting antisemitism.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese went further. He announced a review of the “powers, structures, processes” of the federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies, headed by Dennis Richardson, a former head of ASIO and of the departments of defence and foreign affairs. This is clearly intended to further strengthen the already extensive powers of surveillance, detention and interrogation and to whitewash the role of intelligence and police in the Bondi Beach shootings.

The terrorist attack on the Jewish gathering at Bondi Beach is being exploited by state and federal governments to dramatically increase the strength and powers of the police and intelligence apparatus that will be used not only to crack down on anti-genocide protests but on growing resistance to the threat of wider wars, social austerity and anti-democratic methods of rule.



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