SEP (Australia) holds well-attended meeting on Bondi terror attack

Martin Scott
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held an online public meeting Sunday, to provide a socialist assessment of the mass shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach on December 14 and its aftermath. The meeting was attended by more than 160 people from across Australia and around the world, many of whom were attending their first SEP meeting.

Speakers Oscar Grenfell, Cheryl Crisp and chair Max Boddy exposed both the reactionary character of the terror attack and the ruthless exploitation of the tragedy by the political establishment, led by state and federal Labor governments, as a pretext for a deepening assault on democratic rights. They insisted that the only progressive response to the atrocity lies in the independent mobilisation of the working class on a socialist program against genocide, war and authoritarianism.

Opening the meeting, Boddy, assistant national secretary of the SEP, stressed that the Bondi attack, in which 15 people were murdered and dozens more wounded at a Hanukkah celebration, was "a reactionary, cowardly act of terrorism and must be rejected without qualification." He emphasised that Jewish people in Australia and internationally bear no responsibility for the Zionist Israeli regime's imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza.

Boddy explained that the shooters adhered to the communalist, sectarian ideology associated with Islamic State, which diverts the anger produced by imperialist crimes into ethnic and religious hatred. This ideology, he said, "is profoundly anti-working class and counter-revolutionary," seeking to divide workers and block the development of a unified struggle against capitalism, the real source of war and oppression.

All speakers warned that the central political significance of the Bondi atrocity lies in how it is being seized upon to justify far?reaching attacks on democratic rights, above all the effort to suppress the growing anti?genocide and anti?war movement. Boddy pointed to legislation rushed through parliament by the state Labor government on Christmas Eve, which empowers the police commissioner to ban protests for up to 90 days after a declared terrorist incident.

"These measures are not about protecting Jewish people from violence," Boddy said. "They are aimed at silencing mass opposition to genocide in Gaza and to the broader agenda of militarism and austerity."

Grenfell, a leading writer for the *World Socialist Web Site* and member of the SEP national committee, delivered a detailed political analysis of the Bondi shootings and their aftermath, which, he stressed, could only be understood by drawing upon historical experience.

Grenfell drew a parallel with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the US, which claimed almost 3,000 lives.

"Almost overnight," Grenfell said, "the American ruling class and its allies seized upon September 11 to carry out policies that would impact the lives of hundreds of millions, or even billions, of people," including the war against Afghanistan, the longest-running imperialist war in modern history, and the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq.

At the same time, September 11 was used as a pretext for "a massive restructuring of political life domestically, centred on boosting the powers of the state and attacking democratic rights."

Grenfell characterised this as "the classic case of a murky terrorism incident immediately being exploited by the ruling elite to pursue unstated aims," and said the same is true of the Bondi attack.

He noted that the terror attack was not a random act of criminality, but a "political crime with political motives," rooted in Sunni extremist ideology associated with Islamic State (IS). This current, he explained, is not only violently antisemitic but also hostile to many Muslims, as well as to secularism, democracy and socialism, functioning as a reactionary weapon against the working class across the Middle East and globally.

Grenfell explained that "the emergence of IS was the direct outcome of imperialist intervention—first the ravaging of Iraqi society, and then Washington's conscious policy of arming, funding and training an Islamist opposition in Syria."

This ideology is antithetical to the mass protest movement against the genocide, which "has been multi-ethnic, multi-religious and secular," and which has "explicitly rejected antisemitism and drawn a distinction between Judaism and Zionism."

Despite this, the Australian political and media establishment immediately insisted that the Bondi atrocity "was the result of mass opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza," and that "the solution was to ban all demonstrations."

Grenfell indicted the pseudo?left groups, including Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance and Solidarity, for covering up Labor's central role in this offensive. Socialist Alternative was calling on "workers and youth to build a popular-front style movement, encompassing Labor, the unions, the Greens and the pseudo-left against the far-right," while the other groups "have raised only the need for more protests, appealing to and pressuring

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the governments to halt their attacks on democratic rights, even when protests are banned."

Crisp warned that an analysis of the Bondi terror attack could not stop at denunciation. "Whatever the purported aims of the terrorists," she explained, "their actions have been seized upon as a pretext to push a wider political agenda… that poses an existential threat to democratic rights and to the political independence of the working class."

Crisp situated the Australian developments within a rapidly escalating world situation, drawing particular attention to the Trump administration's neo?colonial assault on Venezuela and the police execution of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis in the opening days of 2026. She explained that "imperialism abroad and repression at home are two sides the same coin."

The US abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, the imposition of a naval blockade and the open proclamation that American capitalism will seize and indefinitely exploit the country's oil resources mark, she said, "a decisive turn to naked, colonial?style plunder" and the repudiation of any pretence of adherence to international law.

At the same time, the murder of Good by an ICE agent, brazenly defended by the White House, reveals the consolidation of dictatorial methods at home, including the normalisation of state killings and the unleashing of Gestapo?style immigration raids against tens of thousands of workers.

However, these processes are not confined to the US, Crisp explained. "The political situation in Australia is shifting sharply. Once touted as a stable haven of peace and prosperity—always a lie—the real relations and situation have exploded in a violent shattering of this false façade. Labor, long presented as a social-democratic guardian of working-class interests, has openly positioned itself as the central enforcer of imperialist foreign policy and domestic authoritarianism. From backing Israel's war to deepening alignment with US geostrategic aims in the Indo-Pacific, Labor is accelerating militarisation and remaking Australia into a frontline state for confrontation with China.

"At home, the same logic that drives support for war—the need to discipline labour, to restructure social spending, to impose a "productivity" offensive—is being used to justify domestic repression: higher military spending, aggressive policing and the dismantling of democratic and social rights."

Crisp presented a concrete outline of the implications of this assault for the working class and the programmatic basis upon which it must be fought:

• **Political independence**

Workers must break from the illusions that any section of the bourgeois state—including Labor—can be appealed to for protection.

• **Defend democratic rights as class rights**

The right to assemble, to protest, and to organise are the class weapons of workers everywhere.

• **International working class solidarity**

Only a united international working-class movement can confront the capitalist redivision of the world and its drive to war.

• **Organise democratically in workplaces and communities**

We call for the formation of rank-and-file committees in workplaces, in public services and in universities that are independent of the bureaucratic and conciliatory union structures.

• **Political leadership and a revolutionary program**

The construction of a Trotskyist vanguard, internationally coordinated, is the strategic task in the present conjuncture.

• **The role of the SEP**

Our party stands for the independent political organisation of the working class.

Crisp concluded by stating that "the murder at Bondi is a human tragedy that must be grieved. But the political use to which it is being put must be resisted by organised working-class action. The capitalist class will never hand us democracy; we must fight for it. The global drive to war and dictatorship will not be reversed by appeals to the capitalist state. It can only be ended by the international working class taking political power and reorganising society on the basis of genuine democratic control and social need."

The reports were followed by a Q&A session, in which the three panellists, along with other longstanding SEP members, answered important questions from attendees, who were highly engaged and contributed to a lively discussion in the meeting's chat window.

Mike Head, a prominent WSWS writer and a member of the SEP's national committee, reiterated the "complete opposition between anti-Zionism and antisemitism." He explained that "hatred towards Jews has been used historically to divide the working class and bolster the most reactionary regimes… most notoriously, by the Nazis in the 1930s."

Head explained that Zionism had been used to exploit the holocaust to divert growing support among Jewish workers and intellectuals for socialism and the struggle against capitalism, the ultimate source of class oppression, into a separatist apartheid-like state, which has nothing to do with religion, but which is a product of imperialism itself.

Nick Beams, former SEP national secretary and a leading writer for the WSWS, stressed the importance of understanding new political developments, including the Bondi terror attack, within the context of deepening crisis of global capitalism, expressed most sharply in its centre, the US. He noted that even bourgeois media outlets were now raising that "imperialism is back."

As such, the perspective of the Marxist movement, grounded in the analysis of Lenin and Trotsky, far from being outdated, as our political opponents claim, was in fact more relevant than ever. "Socialism is not some utopia for which we have to fight, but an immediate necessity. It is the only alternative to capitalist barbarism. There is no other road."

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