

Australia: Bondi terror attack meeting attendees denounce Labor's anti-protest laws

Our reporters

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The Socialist Equality Party's January 11 online meeting was attended by more than 160 workers, students and young people from across Australia and internationally. It provided a socialist assessment of the December 14 mass shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach, in which 15 people were killed and dozens wounded at a Hanukkah celebration when two gunmen, father and son Sajid and Naveed Akram, opened fire on the crowd.

The meeting rejected both the reactionary, sectarian ideology that motivated the attack and the attempts by state and federal Labor governments to exploit the tragedy to suppress opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza, expand police powers and curtail democratic rights.

Speakers explained that acts of terrorism are routinely seized upon by governments to justify emergency laws and suppress political opposition, above all the movement against war and militarism. In Australia, this has already taken the form of new police powers in New South Wales to shut down protests.

The meeting outlined the need for organised working-class action against this deepening repression, emphasising that the only progressive response to the Bondi atrocity is the independent mobilisation of the working class on a socialist program against genocide, war and authoritarianism.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to several of the attendees after the meeting.

Hazem, an electrician from Sydney, told the WSWS he joined the meeting because "I want to take more interest in the political landscape. I am a socialist at heart. I think everyone should have a democratic vote. It was interesting to see the viewpoints of the Socialist Equality Party.

"One of the good points was pulling things back from a simplistic view to a holistic one. It's not just the Bondi attack, but global events that are happening. It's good to look from the outside in and see it that way."

Of the perpetrators of the December 14 attack, Hazem said: "The guys that did this are insane. They've been brainwashed into doing things. Does the current environment lead people to do that? Probably."

Speaking about broader political developments, he said: "If you look at the US and Venezuela, it's like the Roman Empire. It's using the military for its economy, with no regard for its core principles, disregarding its constitution and its Bill of Rights. The emperor does whatever it wants to keep things afloat."

"I think it's messed up to a certain extent. Trump is doing whatever benefits him. I see it as a greed thing, and capitalism facilitates this greed."

"I do believe there is something people are missing. It's a global economy. As the US collapses, the rest of the world collapses. Whatever happens in one country affects another country."

Hazem expressed strong agreement with the meeting's call for rank-and-file committees. He said: "I recall the Iraq protests, and I distinctly remember telling my friends and family that if we just stopped work for two days, there wouldn't be a war. The workers do have the power, but they are not aware of it."

Debbie, a jazz musician in Victoria, said she found the meeting "very interesting" and welcomed hearing a socialist perspective. "I love that there are people out there who want to do something. I'm against what Israel is doing. I've seen how Italian dockworkers took strike action and refused to handle weapons so they wouldn't reach Israel."

"It seems to me that fascism is on the rise. There are

24 people in prison in Britain because they occupied Elbit Systems in 2024. They've been jailed for more than a year, and one young woman has been on hunger strike for 71 days. The government there has no compassion or soul.

"In the US, ICE agents are killing people in the street, and I wonder what we can do. We're starting to see this in Australia as well. I want to know more about socialism, what it really is."

Kerry, a semi-retired project manager from rural Victoria, said the speakers raised "a lot of food for thought about Bondi, but also broader things about how capitalism is toxic for the whole planet. I learnt quite a bit from connecting the dots."

As a high school student, Kerry protested against the Vietnam War. She later participated in demonstrations against the 2003 Iraq invasion and, more recently, the Gaza genocide.

"I'm very, very concerned with the way the world is going today. I think things are worse now than they have been for decades," she said.

Kerry said the Bondi terror attack was being falsely portrayed as a product of the Palestine solidarity movement. "This is now being presented as 'Bondi was because of the marches.' I go to the Palestine marches when I can. That distinction between Zionism and Judaism is so important, because I don't think people quite realise how many Jews are actually anti-Zionist."

She continued: "Yes, there is antisemitism. But Labor has ignored the fact that we have literal neo-Nazis walking the streets now, real antisemites. The government condemns pro-Palestinian people when we've got Nazis going down the street and attacking Indigenous people in their camps."

Kerry said, "The Labor government is now a servant of the far right and of Zionism. This is the biggest human-rights disaster we've faced in a long time. Basically, we have Labor and Liberal, which might as well be the same party. The two of them were preferring each other in the last federal election to keep out left-wing alternatives.

"Albanese has not supported Islamic people in Australia, who are being attacked brutally, and the racism that is mounting every day against Muslims in this country as a result—I just find it sickening."

She also responded to the meeting's criticism of the

trade union bureaucracy, which has joined the campaign to denounce anti-genocide protesters. "To a very great extent, what's happened with the union movement is that key figures in various unions see it as a stepping stone into politics, to get elected into a safe Labor seat and then get all the financial benefits that go with it."

Anthony, a student from Newcastle, said the Australian government had used the Bondi shooting to advance a reactionary political agenda.

"They've taken this tragedy as an opportunity to push political motives to defend Israel and crack down on pro-Palestine, anti-Zionist movements and free speech. It's not surprising, but it's very upsetting to see."

He said: "Antisemitism is a serious issue and we should be concerned about it. But to treat any opposition to the state of Israel as antisemitism is dangerous and undemocratic. It goes against free speech, because we should be able to criticise states, especially when they are committing genocide. Calling that antisemitism is a farce.

"It's a false dichotomy to say that being pro-Palestine means being antisemitic."

He said a key lesson of the meeting was the historical role of terrorism in justifying repression. "We saw after 9/11 how attacks were used to push through things people otherwise wouldn't accept, like war in the Middle East and deeply undemocratic policies. There's a clear historical pattern of these situations being exploited politically."

Asked about Socialism AI, the Marxist augmented?intelligence educational tool launched in December by the WSWS, he said: "I'm very critical of AI, because so far it's mainly been used in the interests of capital. But to dismiss it entirely is shortsighted. Socialism AI could make a vast body of socialist literature more accessible and help people develop politically and in terms of class consciousness."



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