

Australian Labor government rolls out red carpet for Israeli president

Oscar Grenfell
3 February 2026

Demonstrating its total support for the mass slaughter of the Palestinians, the federal Labor government is preparing to welcome Israeli President Isaac Herzog to the country for an official state visit. Herzog is due to arrive in Australia next Monday and remain for four days.

The Laborites, at the federal level and in the states, have made clear that they will roll out the red carpet for one of the chief butchers of Gaza. The visit will include a massive security mobilisation and an attempt to ban protests against the Israeli leader in Sydney, Australia's most populous city.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese publicly invited Herzog to visit in the week following the December 14 attack at Sydney's Bondi Beach. That antisemitic atrocity, targeting a Hanukkah celebration, was perpetrated by two Islamic State-inspired terrorists, one of whom had previously been on the radar of ASIO, the domestic intelligence agency.

The invitation to Herzog was presented as an opportunity for him to condole the Australian Jewish community and to himself mourn the lives lost. That can only be described as an obscenity.

It is based on the fraudulent conflation of the Israeli state, a fascistic outpost of imperialism in the Middle East, with the Jewish people internationally. Such an argument is itself antisemitic, identifying all Jews, many of whom are deeply opposed to Israel's persecution of the Palestinians, with a criminal regime.

Herzog has no business shedding crocodile tears over the deaths of innocent civilians, whatever their ethnicity or religion. His relationship to mass murder and terrorism is that of a perpetrator, not an opponent.

Last September, Herzog was denounced by a United Nations commission of inquiry as having incited genocide.

In a speech five days after the October 7, 2023 Palestinian military operation, Herzog had declared: "It's an entire nation out there that is responsible. It is not true, this rhetoric about civilians who were not aware and not involved. It is absolutely not true." That is, Herzog, sitting at the apex of the Israeli state, was explicitly justifying and calling for a war of extermination against the Palestinians.

While falsely presented in much of the Australian press as occupying a ceremonial role, the Israeli president has been at the forefront of the defence of Israel's campaign of mass murder. He has repeatedly denounced United Nations bodies, human rights organisations and other international fora as "antisemitic," for their often limited criticisms of the slaughter of Palestinians.

Last week, on the eve of Herzog's arrival, Israel belatedly admitted that the Gaza Health Ministry's count, of at least 70,000 Palestinian deaths, was accurate. For the best part of two years, Israeli leaders had presented the health ministry's figures as "fake news" and Hamas propaganda, even as people all over the world witnessed the scenes of Israeli mass murder.

As president, Herzog is also directly implicated in the broader rampage of the US and Israel, associated with the transformation of the Gaza genocide into a regional offensive particularly targeting Iran. That includes attacks on Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar and Iran, in acts of aggression that like the genocide violated international law.

Of particular relevance to Herzog's visit to Australia, ostensibly to express his horror over a terrorist attack, is his government's own terrorist attack on Lebanon. In September 2024, the Israeli intelligence agency detonated explosives contained in tampered pagers across Lebanon. At least 42 people were killed,

including children, and hundreds more were injured.

Herzog was not uninvolved. In the days after the attack, he fronted the Israeli response, angrily denouncing any suggestion that his regime was responsible. Those statements were later exposed as a fraud, including when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gratuitously gifted US President Donald Trump a golden pager in celebration of the attack.

Herzog, in other words, was a key player in trying to cover-up a terrorist attack that his government perpetrated.

In the lead-up to the visit, Albanese and other Labor leaders have aggressively defended the invitation and threatened any opposition. Last week, Albanese demanded that the population “recognise the solemn nature of the engagement that President Herzog will have” and “bear that in mind by the way that they respond.”

The attempt to present Herzog’s visit as simply relating to the Bondi attack is a sham. In reality, the invitation was a signal of Labor’s full support for the Israeli regime, including its ongoing attempts to ethnically-cleanse Palestinians from Gaza and the renewed threats of the Trump administration to carry out war against Iran.

Throughout the Gaza genocide, the Labor government has supported Israel politically, diplomatically and materially, including through the continued export of advanced weapons components. But it has frequently sought to obfuscate that reality, through cynical references to the importance of civilian life. With the invitation to Herzog, the mask is off and Labor is openly identifying itself with the genocidal regime and its leadership.

That is one component of a dramatic shift to the right, which the Bondi attack has been used to justify.

The other component is the bid to outlaw all opposition to the genocide and the right to political dissent itself.

In the immediate aftermath of the Bondi atrocity, New South Wales Labor (NSW) Premier Chris Minns rammed through extraordinary laws providing the state’s police commissioner with the power to ban demonstrations for up to three months following a terrorism designation.

NSW Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon yesterday extended a ban that has been in place since the

legislation passed parliament in December, for another two weeks. He explicitly declared that an aim of the extension was to prevent public displays of opposition to Herzog. A planned march from Sydney Town Hall to the NSW parliament next Monday evening, Lanyon declared, was unauthorised and could not proceed.

In other words, in their defence of a fascistic government perpetrating genocide, the Labor governments are themselves implementing measures that have always been identified with police-state regimes.

The visit and the assault on popular opposition are no doubt shocking and angering masses of people. The critical question is to draw political lessons.

Throughout the genocide, the Greens and pseudo-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, have promoted the fraud that with sufficient pressure, Labor would end its support for the genocide.

They covered up the reality that Labor’s support for some of the worst war crimes since the Holocaust was not an aberration. It was an expression of Labor’s essence as a party of imperialist war and reaction, and was inseparably connected to its participation in an eruption of militarism globally, including participation in US-led preparations for war against China.

After more than two years of protests, Labor has not shifted to the left, it has shifted dramatically to the right.

That underscores the need, not for fawning appeals to the government, but for the most determined political struggle against it. Such a struggle must be based on the mobilisation of the working class, industrially and politically and a socialist perspective, aimed at abolishing the root cause of war and reaction, the outmoded capitalist system itself.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact