Leader of Australia's far-right One Nation party goes on Islamophobic tirade

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On Monday evening, Pauline Hanson, the leader of Australia's far-right One Nation party, went on a foul Islamophobic tirade, suggesting that there are no "good Muslims" in the country.

The remarks underscored the xenophobic and even fascistic character of One Nation, which is coming to ever greater prominence amid a crisis of the two-party set-up and a lurch to the right by the entire political establishment.

Hanson was being interviewed on Murdoch's Sky News, which functions as a purveyor of anti-immigrant filth, nationalism and right-wing conspiracy theories. In comments combining all of those tendencies, along with Hanson's usual ignorance, she rambled: "I've got no time for radical Islam. Their religion concerns me because of what it says in the Koran. They hate Westerners. That's what it's all about."

She continued: "You say, 'Well, there's good Muslims out there.' How can you tell me there are good Muslims?" There are an estimated 813,000 adherents of the Islamic faith in Australia.

Speaking to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) two days later, Hanson said there may be some "good Muslims," going on to reference a formerly Islamic individual who went on to run as a One Nation candidate. Hanson then carried on again about global caliphates, child brides and other Islamophobic tropes.

In a particularly inflammatory move, Hanson declared that non-Islamic "people can't go" to Lakemba, a working-class suburb in Sydney's south-west, without feeling unsafe. The suburb has the highest proportion of Muslims in the country and is the site of its largest Mosque.

In the weeks preceding Hanson's comments, Lakemba Mosque had received two poison pen letters including terrorist threats. Yesterday, shortly after she named Lakemba, it was revealed that a third had been received, making threats of violence and explicitly referencing the 2019 Christchurch massacre, where Australian-born right-wing terrorist Brenton Tarrant murdered 51 Muslims in New Zealand.

In the days before Hanson singled out the suburb, the Mosque's leaders had stated that they were facing unprecedented security threats in the lead up to Ramadan, which begins this week. In that context, Hanson's explicit reference to Lakemba has the character of incitement.

Hanson's comments have been condemned by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, as well as other Labor leaders and representatives of the opposition Liberal-National Coalition. Even her star recruit, former National Party leader Barnaby Joyce, would not endorse his leader's remarks.

Many of the condemnations basically accept Hanson's racist framework of "good" and "bad" Muslims, only quibbling with her claim that there are none of the former. More fundamentally, the denunciations are dripping in hypocrisy.

Hanson and One Nation have always fed off the official promotion of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment by Labor, the Coalition and the media.

Since the antisemitic December 14 terrorist attack in Bondi, the entire political establishment has been in overdrive to blame opponents of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and to demonise all Muslims. The federal Labor government and Labor's state administrations have led the charge, announcing a battery of anti-democratic measures, which have nothing to do with combatting Islamic State terrorists and everything to do with repressing opposition to the genocide and cracking down on democratic rights.

It is hardly an accident that it is in that context that

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One Nation has registered record polling results. The official post-Bondi campaign, substantially waged in the name of combatting "hate speech," has served as an incubator for genuine hate speech as Hanson's comments demonstrate.

The condemnations of Hanson are aimed at obscuring the fact that One Nation is now a central player in a reactionary dynamic encompassing the entire political establishment. It is feeding off the promotion of Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian and anti-immigrant sentiment, including by Labor. Then its own right-wing agitation is setting new benchmarks of reaction that the major parties are increasingly competing with.

According to some polling, One Nation is sitting as high as 27 percent of the primary vote. In most polls, it now eclipses the Coalition as the second-most popular party. In some, it is only around 5 percentage points behind Labor.

One Nation's greater prominence coincides with an existential crisis of the Coalition. Since its massive May 2025 election defeat, the Coalition has broken apart twice. Both of its wings have been gripped by factional conflict and recriminations. Last week, the Liberals dumped their post-election leader Sussan Ley, replacing her with Angus Taylor.

The ascension of Taylor, a representative of the Liberals' conservative wing, points to the direction of the Liberals amid their crisis. It can be described as a march to the right. Taylor, upon being elected leader, immediately declared that he would campaign on a platform of "Australian values" and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

He has, however, signalled that this will be combined with the Liberals' traditional calls for "fiscal responsibility," lower taxes and other conservative economic talking points. That pitch is already coming under pressure from even more right-wing layers within the Liberal Party, such as Andrew Hastie, who are openly calling for a Trump-style, right-wing populist turn.

Whatever the twists and turns, it is clear that the Coalition, as a broad church conservative party, is dead. The relatively broad middle class of the post-World War II period, that formed the social basis of such politics, no longer exists after decades of social polarisation.

Sections of the ruling elite are seeking to develop a new far-right formation, whether through the Coalition, One Nation or another vehicle. The country's wealthiest individual, mining magnate Gina Rinehart, a Trump enthusiast who in the past has heavily promoted the most right-wing layers within the Coalition, has increasingly identified herself with Hanson.

The lurch to the right is from above, not below. A Mood of the Nation survey, conducted by SEC Newgate Research in early February and released early this week, found that 36 percent of One Nation's supporters were backing it because of a "rejection of the other major parties" and a "desire for an alternative." That was a greater motivator than One Nation's anti-immigrant policies, which were cited as its primary attraction by only 17 percent of its supporters.

The crisis of the Coalition signals not only a recalibration of right-wing politics in a fascistic direction. It is also an expression of a developing breakdown of the two-party system that has defended Australian capitalism for the past 80 years. Labor, whose policies are indistinguishable from those of the Coalition, centring on militarism, austerity and attacks on democratic rights, has lost any mass base of support in the working class and is polling in the low 30 percent range.

The crucial issue for workers and young people, who are overwhelmingly hostile to the growing prominence of the far right, is to develop an independent political movement of the working class. Forces such as One Nation can only gain traction as a result of the suppression of the class struggle by Labor and its associated trade union bureaucracies, and the social crisis that both of those have inflicted over decades.

The alternative is a socialist movement, explicitly directed against war, authoritarianism and fascism, and advancing a program to meet the needs of working people, for decent wages, working conditions and housing.

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