

Australian PM heckled at Lakemba mosque over support for Gaza genocide, war

Oscar Grenfell
20 March 2026

Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke received a hostile reception when they attended Lakemba mosque in southwest Sydney yesterday, with congregants denouncing them for supporting the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the broader US-led war throughout the Middle East.

The incident, which went viral on social media and was widely reported in the press, provided a rare glimpse of popular anti-war sentiment. Throughout the genocide, mass hostility has alternately been blacked out and defamed by the media. Since the US launched its assault on Iran, the press has been full of propaganda justifying the illegal war.

Albanese and Burke were at the mosque, the largest in the country, for Eid prayers marking the end of the holy Islamic month of Ramadan. Their visit was coordinated with leaders of the Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA), which manages the mosque. They evidently thought this would be a benign photo opportunity.

But those plans went awry. Footage shows congregants standing up and shouting that Albanese and Burke were “genocide supporters.” They have “supported the killing of our brothers and sisters” one man yelled.

When an LMA official speaking on microphone said it was necessary to have “deep intellectual discussions” about how Australian Muslims “engage with political leadership,” several in the crowd responded: “Get them out of here!”

Appeals for the congregants to “sit down” fell on deaf ears. When the same LMA representative urged attendees to show “respect” to Albanese and Burke, one man responded: “they don’t respect us.”

One of the videos pans from the angry worshippers to

Albanese, sitting on the floor with a nervous expression on his face. It appears that he and Burke were ushered out of the building shortly thereafter. Walking along the street towards their cars and still being heckled, Albanese and Burke were surrounded by a phalanx of suited federal agents numbering as many as twenty.

The reaction among ordinary congregants was entirely fitting. Given their record and their ongoing actions, the appearance of Albanese and Burke had the character of a provocation.

For more than two years, the Labor government has steadfastly supported Israel’s assault on Gaza, even as it has claimed at least 75,000 lives and been branded as a genocide by all reputable human rights organisations and experts in international law.

Labor has not only backed the historic war crimes politically and diplomatically, but has also materially aided the mass slaughter, including through the export to Israel of key components for the F-35 fighter jets that have levelled Gaza.

Now Labor is an active participant in the broader war throughout the Middle East, which the genocide was always aimed at facilitating. Albanese was among the first world leaders to endorse US President Donald Trump’s utterly criminal attack on Iran and has since committed an advanced Australian warplane, missiles and personnel to aid the war of extermination against that country of 93 million people.

Resolve polling, reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* last week, showed overwhelming opposition to Australia’s involvement in the Iran war: “61 per cent of Australians say they want to stay out of the conflict entirely, with just 13 per cent eager for Australia to be involved.”

Participants in the mosque protest told the media they were particularly incensed by Israel’s current

bombardment and invasion of Lebanon, where many have relatives. Labor is backing the unprovoked onslaught, which has already claimed more than 1,000 lives and displaced over a million.

In seeking to justify their invitation to Albanese, the LMA said it had been an opportunity for members of the Muslim community to politely discuss their concerns with the Labor government, including over its inadequate response to Islamophobia. That line reflects the middle-class, community politics of the LMA which is oriented to the political establishment and to government.

Albanese's response to the protest underscored the bankruptcy of those illusions. He contemptuously told the press that he had received a "very warm reception" at the mosque.

Albanese dismissed the protest as "a couple of people who were heckling," adding, "some people don't like the fact that we have outlawed extremist organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir."

So much for a "dialogue" with the government about Islamophobia. Albanese was essentially dismissing anyone who condemned his government's support for the genocide and war in the Middle East as a wild-eyed Muslim "extremist."

None of the footage indicates that the hecklers were motivated by the ban on Hizb ut-Tahrir. But that prohibition was a major attack on democratic rights and Albanese's boast of it is a warning of an ongoing crackdown on anti-war opposition.

In the wake of the December 14 antisemitic terrorist attack at Sydney's Bondi beach, the Labor government rushed through legislation giving itself the power to ban organisations and even political parties on the vague grounds that they supposedly promote "hate speech." There is no judicial process, with the power residing in the executive.

Hizb ut-Tahrir promotes reactionary political Islamism. But there was no suggestion that it had any connection to terrorism or illegality. Instead, it was criminalised in a matter of weeks in February, solely based on its political views. This sets a precedent for broader attempts to outlaw anti-war organisations. After a ban, membership of a prohibited organisation can be punished by 5 years' imprisonment.

The struggle against war and authoritarianism requires a political fight against the Labor government

by the working class.



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