

Australia: Key issues buried at Brisbane rally against arrest of anti-genocide protester

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A protest was held on Wednesday outside the Roma Street Magistrates Court in Brisbane against the arrest and prosecution of a Palestine solidarity activist for saying the prohibited anti-genocide slogan “from the river to the sea” at a pro-Palestine rally on March 1.

Liam Parry is the first person to be charged for reciting a banned expression under “hate speech” laws—which also proscribe the phrase “globalise the intifada”—introduced on March 1 by Queensland’s right-wing Liberal National Party (LNP) state government.

He is facing one count of reciting or publicly displaying a prohibited expression that is supposedly “reasonably expected to menace, harass or offend a member of the public.” If convicted, Parry could face up to two years’ imprisonment.

Outside the courthouse, protesters chanted “free Palestine” and “Crisafulli you can’t hide, protesting is not a crime”—a reference to state Premier David Crisafulli.

Addressing the media after the court hearing, which was adjourned to a later date, Parry presented the case as a Queensland issue. He said: “I think it’s an important moment in Queensland right now. The government is trying to criminalise pro-Palestine advocacy.”

When asked how he felt facing a possible jail term, Parry said: “It feels surreal, and I think it’s a dangerous moment in Queensland politics that you could face two years’ imprisonment just for saying six words.”

In reality, the federal and state Labor governments are spearheading a police-state crackdown on dissent, not just the LNP government in Queensland. That was clearly displayed in the New South Wales (NSW) Labor government’s banning of marches in Sydney and the unleashing of police violence on protests against the February 9 visit by Israeli President Isaac Herzog at the

invitation of the federal Albanese Labor government.

Since that police rampage at the Sydney Town Hall, the Labor governments in both NSW and Victoria have presided over intimidating police raids to arrest protesters against the ongoing US-Israeli genocide in Gaza and the Albanese government’s complicity in the genocide.

On March 26, heavily-armed NSW police commandos stormed the home of a woman who had joined the large anti-Herzog demonstration. She was dragged out of bed at 5 a.m. and handcuffed after the police smashed open her front door. At least four similar raids were mounted across Sydney, with the protest participants charged with serious offences, such as affray and intimidating or assaulting police, some punishable by years of imprisonment.

The next day, on March 27, Victorian riot police in full combat gear conducted eight early morning raids on homes around Melbourne to detain eight women who had taken part in a March 6 anti-genocide protest against the Albanese government outside the Victorian Trades Hall building.

The women were held for hours before being released on anti-democratic bail conditions, also facing serious charges such as criminal damage to property and behaving in a riotous manner in a public place.

One of the most politically revealing features of the Victorian police operation, conducted under Labor Premier Jacinta Allan’s government, was that Victorian Trades Hall Council secretary Luke Hilakari called in the police and supplied them with photos of the women.

These raids are a warning that the Labor governments, state and federal, are escalating their assault on anti-genocide and anti-war opposition as the US-Israeli onslaught extends to Iran and Lebanon, with

the political and material backing of the Albanese government.

But no mention of these raids was made at Wednesday's rally, with speakers focused instead on denouncing the LNP state government.

Nor was there any mention of the Albanese government's own "prohibited hate group" laws, which allow a minister to outlaw political groups based on their "support" for vaguely defined "hate crimes" that also falsely equate anti-genocide dissent with antisemitism. Anyone convicted of being a member or supporter of a banned group faces up to 15 years' imprisonment, a far lengthier sentence than that set by the LNP in Queensland.

The Albanese government's support for and participation in the Trump administration's criminal war on Iran, including by sending SAS troops, missiles, a war command plane and other military personnel to the Persian Gulf, will lead to more measures to suppress opposition.

A report on Wednesday's rally in the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative's newspaper *Red Flag* also presented Parry's arrest as a purely Queensland issue, covering up the leading role of Labor governments in the attack on basic democratic rights and support for imperialist war and genocide.

Like the rally organisers, *Red Flag* advertised protests to be held in Brisbane on the weekend of April 18-19, specifically against the Crisafulli government's laws, again leaving out Labor's role.

The only way to defeat these attacks, and stop the US-Israeli barbarism in the Middle East, is through the mobilisation of the working class against all those responsible, including the Labor governments.

As the WSWS has stated: "The demand must be raised for the charges against Parry to be dropped, and for the overturning of the Queensland bans and all the 'hate speech' laws imposed in different states and federally. Parry's arrest is a test case: if governments can imprison those who voice slogans against genocide, they will move to criminalise anti-war dissent more broadly."

This fight requires the development of an independent working-class movement—in workplaces, throughout industries and across borders—against the suppression of democratic rights, the Gaza genocide and the war on Iran and Lebanon, and against the

capitalist system that is the root cause of war and repression.



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