

Australia: Victoria's Labor government oversees police state raids against anti-war protesters

Eric Ludlow
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Victoria's Labor government under Premier Jacinta Allan is spearheading an increasingly authoritarian offensive against basic democratic rights, deploying counter-terrorism police in pre-dawn raids on the homes of peaceful anti-genocide protesters.

These operations are part of a broader turn to police-state methods by Labor at state and federal level, as it deepens its participation in escalating imperialist violence internationally and imposes a historic assault on the social rights of the working class.

The immediate aim of the raids is to silence and punish those who oppose Israel's genocide in Gaza and the war on Iran. But their wider purpose is even more sinister: to create an atmosphere of fear, to send a message that anyone who publicly challenges the war drive or the destruction of social conditions can expect to be treated as a security threat, have their home invaded and their life turned upside down.

The most recent raid occurred at about 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday 12 May, when Victoria Police's Security Investigation Unit (SIU)—a counter-terror squad—descended on the home of an individual known only as "Alex," an anti-genocide protester who had been arrested at a rally against the visit of Israeli President Isaac Herzog in February.

In an interview with Sydney Criminal Lawyers, Alex said officers smashed open the bathroom door while she was on the toilet and grabbed her phone from her hand.

Alex was not charged, but was handed a notice compelling her to surrender her passwords, which she refused to do. The warrant cited potential offences under Victoria's newly strengthened "hate" and "incitement" provisions—including "incitement on ground of protected attribute" and "threaten physical harm or property damage on ground of protected attribute"—yet police refused to say what specific words or actions supposedly justified a counter-terrorism raid.

"The SIU is a counterterrorism unit. One of their specialities is disruption. They want to disrupt people perceived as political enemies of the state. They're also involved in preemptive policing and surveillance," Alex said.

This was at least the third wave of such operations targeting

Melbourne-based pro-Palestinian activists in as many months.

At about 7:00 a.m. on 17 April, roughly 50 Victoria Police officers raided four homes over a satirical guerrilla-theatre protest outside the US consulate on St Kilda Road, held on 26 March in opposition to the criminal US-Israeli war on Iran. The three performers—adopting the stage names Gina Minehard, Moregun Chase and Peta Philewangler—poured oil and fake blood at the consulate entrance.

Heavily armed officers linked to counterterrorism units trashed the homes and combed them with tech-sniffing dogs.

The Allan government had already overseen a major escalation of police state repression on 27 March, when eight women—now known as the "Zelda 8"—were simultaneously raided by Victoria Police's Public Order Response Team (PORT) over a small early-morning protest three weeks earlier at the Victorian Trades Hall. Their "crime" consisted of placing an apron on the statue of equal pay campaigner Zelda D'Aprano, wearing "Difficult Woman" T-shirts and writing the same phrase in washable red chalk on the pavement, to denounce the union bureaucracy's complicity in the Gaza genocide.

Police in full combat gear forced their way into the women's homes, some of whom are in their seventies, handcuffed them in their nightclothes, denied them access to medication and held them for hours before release. Bail conditions banned them from Melbourne's central business district—the traditional centre of political protest—until at least October. Trades Hall secretary Luke Hilakari—a leading union bureaucrat—photographed the women, provided a five-page statement and images to police and falsely depicted the protest as "antisemitic," functioning directly as an informer for the state.

These operations have been consciously prepared by Allan's Labor government.

In November 2025, it rammed through sweeping legislation—with the full support of the opposition Liberal party—expanding police powers to unmask protesters, ban common protest equipment and restrict "prohibited" symbols, all under the now-standard pretext of countering "hate" and

“antisemitism.” Civil liberties organisations warned the measures were a fundamental attack on the right to protest. They are now being used in conjunction with “hate speech” provisions to justify terror-style raids on people who have committed no act of violence whatsoever.

The Victoria Police raids targeting those who protested Herzog’s presence are a continuation and deepening of state and federal policy of Labor governments.

In New South Wales (NSW), premier Chris Minns’s Labor government has been in the vanguard of the assault on pro-Palestinian protests. Minns’ “anti-protest” laws—reinforced after the December 2025 Bondi Beach attack—were used to attempt a ban on a mass Sydney Town Hall rally against Herzog’s visit in February and to unleash a police rampage in which 27 protesters were arrested and dozens assaulted.

On 13 May, NSW Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon announced that charges brought under the now unconstitutional Public Assembly Restriction Declarations (PARDs) law against protesters arrested at the 9 February Town Hall rally would be withdrawn pending review. That came after a court ruled that the PARDs, providing police with the power to ban protests for three months after a terrorist incident, were unconstitutional.

The first charge—against Palestinian-Australian Eyad Shadid—was dropped that afternoon. Lanyon also confirmed that the legality of directions issued under the separate Major Events Declaration is under additional review, potentially widening the scope of dropped charges further.

Minns has refused to apologise for the police violence and NSW Police have issued secrecy notices shielding critical evidence from a public inquiry into the crackdown.

Federally, the Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has supplied the overarching legal and ideological framework. Its Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026 lowers the bar for criminal prosecution from inciting violence to “promoting hatred,” creates new speech offences and adds further grounds for deportation and visa cancellation.

Herzog’s visit was a provocation led by Albanese in the aftermath of the December 2025 Bondi Beach shootings, presenting the trip as an act of solidarity with the Jewish community while repressing anti-genocide protesters.

The Bondi Beach attack—in which 15 people were killed at a Hanukkah celebration on 14 December 2025—has been wielded relentlessly as the political justification for every subsequent anti-protest measure.

The political logic underlying these operations is suppression of all opposition amid mounting attacks on social conditions and expanding imperialist violence. The attempt to connect that atrocity to the mass anti-genocide movement is a fraud. The attackers were supporters of the sectarian Islamic State terror group, with no relationship to the secular, multi-ethnic and multi-religious movement against the assault on Gaza.

The invocations of Bondi are a deepening of the fraudulent

conflation of opposition to the genocide with antisemitism. The repressive legal framework, however, serves a broader function.

Australian capitalism confronts a working class whose anger is rising over rising inflation, falling real wages, a housing crisis and the wholesale privatisation and dismemberment of public services. Labor governments, at both state and federal level, are the administrators of this assault.

The sharpest expression of this has come in the form of Labor’s May 2026 budget which centres on stripping tens of billions from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and kicking hundreds of thousands of vulnerable disabled people off supports entirely. That is the centrepiece of a far broader austerity agenda, targeting health, education and other essential social programs.

Military spending continues to skyrocket and the wealth of the capitalist class balloons. The ruling elite and the governments which serve them understand that they sit atop a social powder keg. Increased police state measures are a preemptive strike against a working class which is increasingly angry.

As the cost of war, AUKUS, and corporate tax cuts is imposed through falling real wages, gutted services and mass NDIS expulsions, growing layers of workers and youth will come into conflict with the state.

The defence of democratic rights is therefore inseparable from the fight against imperialist war and its source in the capitalist system itself. The raids in Victoria, and the national offensive of which they are part, underscore the necessity for workers and young people to break politically from Labor and the union bureaucracy and take up the struggle for a socialist, internationalist program against war, austerity and repression.



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