

First-ever “left-wing terrorism” charges planned in Australia

Mike Head
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For the first time since unprecedented terrorism laws were imposed in Australia in 2002, the police and intelligence agencies are preparing to lay terrorism-related charges against alleged left-wing activists. This marks a revealing political shift.

Despite the murky character of the accusations, an unknown group of people, said to be motivated by opposition to the Labor government’s support for the Gaza genocide, could face the most severe punishment currently legally available in Australia—imprisonment for life—for allegedly causing damage to three vehicles at a factory producing military equipment components.

Last week, more than a year after the alleged event, the federal and Victorian state police forces issued a joint media release with the domestic spy agency, the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). It announced that their Joint Counter Terrorism Team (JCTT) is “investigating an attack on a Melbourne defence manufacturer as an act of terrorism, potentially orchestrated by far-left extremists with anarchist and revolutionary ideologies.”

The JCTT released blurry brief video extracts and still photographs, soon splashed all over the corporate media as intended, said to display images of “suspects” targeting Lovitt Technologies in Melbourne at 3.55 a.m. on July 5, 2025, “vandalising the business and setting alight multiple vehicles on the property.”

Two video extracts purport to show two unidentifiable people trying to set two cars alight.

The JCTT also alleged that, ten days later, an unnamed “extremist group” posted an online video claiming responsibility for the attack. Moreover, “members of the group voiced their opposition to the Australian Government.” No footage of that video has been released.

It is not possible to independently verify these images, nor the connection between them. But even on their face, the incident was confined to property damage, with no danger to human life.

Lovitt Technologies supplies parts to the global US F-35 fighter jet program, of which both Australia and Israel are members. The Albanese government has continued to defend permitting and facilitating such exports despite mass

demonstrations across Australia and internationally against the intensifying US-armed Israeli genocide.

No explanation was provided by ASIO and the police as to why this announcement was made 13 months later, escalating any potential charges over the incident from offences such as criminal damage or arson, which can carry severe penalties, but far less than life imprisonment.

Newly-installed Victorian state Labor Premier Ben Carroll was quick to voice Labor’s backing for the announcement. He claimed it was “frightening” for Victorians that the police had deemed the event to be a terrorist attack. He pledged to give the police “the resources and support they need to get to the bottom of this.”

As the Socialist Equality Party warned when the sweeping terrorism laws were introduced as part of the Bush administration’s global “war on terror” that underpinned the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, the scope of the legislation is vast. It is so broad that it can be used, far beyond the initially nominated target of Islamic extremism, against political dissent, particularly under conditions of war and deteriorating working and living conditions.

Under the Criminal Code, a terrorist act is any act, or a threat to commit any act, that causes results ranging from death to “serious damage to property,” intending to advance a political, religious or ideological cause, and intending to intimidate anyone or influence any government. There is a meaningless exception for “engaging in advocacy, protest, dissent or industrial action,” only if there is no intention to cause harm to others.

Nothing that ASIO and the police say can be believed. They have a record of labelling incidents as terrorist, such as an old bomb found in a caravan at Dural, near, Sydney, or attacks on synagogues, only for evidence to later emerge linking the actions to criminal gangs.

Moreover, ASIO has a long history, dating back to its establishment by the Chifley Labor government in 1949, of bugging, infiltrating and orchestrating witch hunts, often directed against socialists and left-wing groups. Before that, there was a record of similar police frame-ups, especially during both world wars, when the ruling class feared the development of anti-war movements.

Most notoriously, in 1916, a frame-up was organised by the Hughes Labor government around suspicious fires that broke out in Sydney. Twelve leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) syndicalist movement were arrested, convicted and imprisoned on fraudulent charges of arson, forgery, treason and conspiracy.

Whatever their dubious veracity, this week's allegations serve a definite political purpose: that of conflating the widespread popular opposition to the US-backed Israeli genocide, and left-wing politics as a whole, with terrorism.

In June, in his latest inflammatory annual threat assessment speech, ASIO chief Mike Burgess deliberately bracketed "far-left activists" with neo-Nazis and other far-right elements as dangers to "social cohesion" under conditions he described as global fracturing, the breakdown of strategic alliances, economic instability and social and political "grievances."

Burgess alleged that the media was providing insufficient coverage to "far-left activists" subjecting "Australian companies" with perceived links to Israel to "repeated acts of vandalism and arson." He declared: "Neo-Nazis are antisemitic. Islamic extremism is antisemitic. Anarchists and revolutionary groups can be antisemitic."

This is part of an escalating campaign, backed by the Labor governments, to conflate anti-genocide protests with terrorism, antisemitism and far-right outfits to justify the crackdown on dissent, including the introduction of far-reaching "hate group" laws and more severe foreign interference legislation.

This agenda was made more explicit today. Writing in the *Australian*, Peter Jennings, a Washington-connected regular Murdoch media commentator and adjunct fellow at the right-wing Institute of Public Affairs, described the ASIO-police announcement as "a watershed in Australia's understanding of politically motivated violence."

Jennings said it signalled official recognition that "Australia faces a type of ideological terrorism," which he declared "draws on Marxist traditions." In reality, the Marxist tradition is that of mass working-class movements to overturn capitalist rule, not isolated acts of vandalism or violence.

Jenning insisted that the US and several European countries were already reassessing the growing threat from "violent far-left extremism," and "Australia should be doing the same."

This points to the timing of the ASIO-police announcement. It indicates that these state agencies, directed by the Albanese government, are moving in line with those of the Trump administration, the British Labour government and others across Europe to demonise and witch hunt anti-genocide, anti-war and left-wing opposition.

Last month, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted a supposedly international summit in Washington DC, attended by an Australian representative, calling for countries to collaborate on efforts to counter what he and Trump's fascist deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller described as a growing threat of far-left terror.

In the UK, the Labour government has conducted several trials of individuals charged with terrorism offences after damaging businesses with suspected links to the Israeli government. Last month, a judge handed down sentences totaling more than 26 years in prison to four young Palestine Action activists, over a protest at the Elbit Systems factory in Filton, near Bristol. He ruled for the first time in British legal history that acts of criminal damage carried out during a protest constitute offences with a "terrorist connection."

Last month also, London police arrested 152 people outside a court for peacefully protesting the Labour government's outlawing of Palestine Action as a terrorist group after a protest at an air force base, where a plane was doused with red paint. Since the proscription of Palestine Action a year ago, 3,500 people have been arrested under the UK Terrorism Act for holding cardboard signs reading, "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action."

It is no accident that in the same week as the ASIO-police announcement was made, the Labor government unveiled a bipartisan parliamentary inquiry into the country's "preparedness" for war. Harnessing the economy and society as a whole to war means repressing opposition.

In office since 2022, the Albanese government has more fully integrated Australia, via the AUKUS pact, US basing arrangements and the Pine Gap spy and targeting base in central Australia, into the developing US-led global war, including the genocide against the Palestinians, the illegal assault on Iran, the war against Russia in Ukraine and a vast military build-up in the Indo-Pacific targeting China.

In the same period, Labor has increased ASIO's budget by almost 50 percent, from \$716.9 million in 2021–22 to over a billion dollars—\$1.081 billion—in its latest budget for 2026–27.

The ASIO-police operation is another warning of moves to intimidate and suppress opposition as capitalism plunges into another world war, intensifying the attacks on social spending, working-class conditions and fundamental democratic rights.



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