Australia: Prisoner denied parole despite judge rejecting antisemitism claim

Mike Head
28 August 2026

In a decision that smacks of intervention by a Labor government—essentially in defiance of a judge's order—the Parole Authority in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) last week refused for the second time to release a young prisoner on parole.

Mohommed Farhat, 22, was initially due to be released on parole last December, having served 10 months of a 20-month prison sentence after being paid by people with criminal links to commit acts of arson and vandalism in Sydney in November 2024 supposedly directed against Israel.

Farhat's parole was denied despite NSW Supreme Court justice Desmond Fagan writing to the Parole Authority to warn of a "serious miscarriage of justice." This development points to the Labor government's contempt for judicial rulings.

It also indicates a further unravelling of a farrago of lies and misinformation by the media, Zionist groups and the state and federal Labor governments to depict 13 such attacks, featuring spray-paintings of anti-Israel slogans, in Sydney in the summer of 2024–25 as antisemitic terrorism. The Labor governments exploited the incidents to impose far-reaching "hate speech" laws that seek to outlaw opposition to the US-backed Gaza genocide.

Together with Thomas Stojanovski, Farhat had been sentenced after pleading guilty to charges of property damage, aggravated counts of property and entering land to commit an indictable offence—not terrorism.

On July 30, following a four-day hearing, Justice Fagan ruled against a state Labor government application to subject Farhat to an extended supervision order, with 55 intensive surveillance conditions, when he finishes his sentence.

People sentenced to less than three years in jail are typically released on parole when it comes due. But the state prisons chief, Corrective Services Commissioner Gary McMahon, intervened to oppose parole. McMahon also deemed Farhat a "national security risk" inmate in January 2026.

The Labor government applied for a year-long supervision order under the NSW Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act, declaring that Farhat posed an "unacceptable risk" of committing a serious terrorism offence once released.

After a four-day hearing, however, Fagan found that Farhat was "incited and directed" by another person to commit his vandalism crimes for a $4,000 payment and unspecified quantity of drugs. Farhat "did not intend to express hatred of Jews," the judge said. Rather, Farhat had become involved in actions that he little understood.

Fagan ruled that there was an "insignificant" risk that Farhat would commit a serious terrorism offence. In his lengthy judgment, Fagan said he had considered thousands of pages of evidence tendered by the state, extensive psychological reports and four days of hearings.

Fagan said this had also been the case with the other offenders who had been arrested over the 2024–25 Sydney arson and graffiti attacks, most of whom had pleaded guilty.

NSW Premier Chris Minns and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had rushed to depict these incidents as acts of antisemitism and terrorism. But the Australian Federal Police and the NSW Police revealed in March 2025 what they had concluded all along—that the attacks had been directed by organised crime figures located overseas.

Despite Fagan releasing his statement of reasons for his decision on August 17, the Labor government's Parole Authority again denied Fagan's parole. It did not consider Fagan's findings or the evidence he cited.

In his reasons, Fagan condemned the lumping together of criticism of the state of Israel with antisemitism. He ruled that the "f*** Israel" slogans painted on buildings were "objectively, crude expressions of political hostility to the state of Israel" but "not antisemitic according to the ordinary understanding of that concept in the Australian community."

Fagan quoted a submission made by a prominent Jewish anti-Zionist group, the Jewish Council of Australia, to the Albanese government's witch-hunting Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. The submission stated that over recent decades "the aggressive actions of the state of Israel" have often been conflated with Jewish identity, and this has been cultivated by Israel, and it "causes direct harm to Jewish people worldwide when they are blamed for Israel's actions."

Fagan was not the first judge to criticise the lumping together of condemnation of Israel with antisemitism. He quoted a 2025 judgment by a Federal Court justice, Angus Stewart, that "not all Jews are Zionists or support the actions of Israel in Gaza and

© World Socialist Web Site

that disparagement of Zionism constitutes disparagement of a philosophy or ideology and not a race or ethnic group."

Zionism is a reactionary doctrine developed in the late nineteenth century, advocating the creation of an exclusivist Jewish state in historic Palestine. It remained a minority viewpoint until the Nazi Holocaust, to which Zionist leaders responded by claiming that only the establishment of an apartheid-style Jewish state could protect Jews from further atrocities.

Fagan said that "for decades, Jewish people have been the most forceful critics of Israel's conduct towards the Palestinians." He asked: "How can it be antisemitic—in the established sense of the word—to disparage Israel when doing so accords with the words and beliefs of many Jews?"

His judgment referred to Israel's founding in 1948, stating that the country achieved its intended demographic dominance by the "forcible expulsion of 750,000 indigenous Palestinians" in its first year.

Fagan pointed to Pew Research polling data, which in June 2024 showed 74 percent of Australians were unfavourable towards Israel, a figure that had risen to 79 percent by June 2026. "The surveys show similar rates of disapproval in many other countries," he noted.

"It may reasonably be inferred that the results of polling Australian respondents reflect humanitarian reaction to Israel's genocide of the Gazans since October 7, 2023, the live streaming of which to mobile handsets would be difficult to ignore."

If the 79 percent or any proportion of them should express outrage, or march in protest, it could not be said that their words or conduct would be antisemitic, Fagan said.

The judge rejected the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, on which the state Labor government had relied in seeking to place Farhat on an extended terrorism order.

As Fagan noted, among the examples of antisemitism given by that definition are "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour" and "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis."

Fagan said the "apparent purpose of promoting" the IHRA definition was "to graft onto the community's abhorrence of antisemitism … a parasitic rejection of protest against Israel."

This is significant because the Albanese government has adopted this repressive definition. It is imposing its Special Envoy for Antisemitism Jillian Segal's Plan to Combat Antisemitism by inserting the IHRA definition into all levels of government and public institutions.

The Australian Public Service Commission is applying the IHRA definition in federal workplaces, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has imposed it on more than 960,000 doctors and other health workers, and the Albanese government has threatened to cut funding to universities that do not take similar measures.

This represents a direct attack on fundamental democratic rights. It establishes a punitive apparatus designed to intimidate and silence all those who speak out against the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Last year, the Albanese and Minns governments ruled out repealing or amending the "hate speech" laws, even though their pretext—the spate of "antisemitic attacks"—was exposed as a hoax. The federal and state police said that a caravan packed with expired explosives, discovered on the outskirts of Sydney in January 2025, had nothing to do with antisemitic terrorism, as the governments and the media claimed at the time. Instead, the caravan was a set-up by alleged criminals, seeking to use it to barter with the police for changes to their criminal status.

The police announcement further stated that the entire 2024–25 "wave" of supposed antisemitic attacks in Sydney had been organised by the same criminal network as was behind the caravan hoax.

Questions remain about the potential role of the Israeli state in the fake attacks. The Israeli government followed the incidents at the highest level and invoked them to demand a tougher pro-Zionist line from Australian governments.

After last December's terrorist killings at Sydney's Bondi Beach, allegedly committed by two ISIS-linked extremists, the Albanese government doubled down. It set up its royal commission and rushed through far-reaching "hate group" legislation. Those laws give a minister arbitrary powers to outlaw organisations, including political parties, simply on the basis of being "satisfied" that they support vaguely defined "hate crimes" or "may do so" in the future.

For almost three years, the Zionist regime has waged a war of extermination. More than 73,000 Palestinians have been killed, including over 21,000 children. A UN commission confirmed that Israel is guilty of systemic war crimes, including wilful killing, torture, intentional attacks on civilians and the deliberate targeting of medical infrastructure.

From the outset of the genocide, despite mass protests against its complicity, the Albanese government has acted as a partner in the Washington-backed Israeli war. Labor has supplied political and diplomatic cover to the Netanyahu regime while ensuring military assistance—including intelligence data from the Pine Gap satellite base in central Australia and vital components for F-35 fighter jets used to bomb Gaza.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site