

Australian Labor premier defends unconstitutional ban on Gaza genocide protests

Mike Head
6 September 2026

In an “exclusive interview” published in the Murdoch media’s *Australian* on Friday, New South Wales (NSW) Labor Premier Chris Minns doubled down on his defiant defence of unconstitutional anti-protest laws that his government imposed to ban demonstrations against the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Minns also declared that the policing strategy behind allowing the first anti-genocide march to proceed to the Sydney Opera House on October 9, 2023 was “bullshit” and that he went along with it because he was still a new “baby Premier” at the time.

Minns insisted that the failure to stop the Opera House protest—which was against the screening of the Israeli flag across the building’s famous roof as the massacre of Palestinians began—encouraged the subsequent anti-genocide demonstrations, which became massive across Australia. Once again, he falsely depicted the protests as antisemitic and violent.

This must be taken as another warning of the readiness of all the Labor governments, both state and federal, to outlaw not just Gaza protests but all forms of political dissent, violating basic legal and democratic rights, regardless of court decisions.

As he did in April this year, the Labor premier denounced a ruling that month by the state’s highest court, the NSW Court of Appeal, which declared his government’s laws potentially banning all protests across entire areas of Sydney to be unconstitutional as a breach of the implied freedom of political communication.

Minns also vented frothing hostility for the hundreds of thousands of people who have taken to the streets in repeated, initially weekly, anti-genocide demonstrations, peaking with a march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge on August 3, 2025, joined by an estimated 300,000 participants.

“We’ve seen this over and over again, that with a certain group in our community, if you give them an inch, they will take a mile, and it becomes a green light for worse and worse and worse behaviour,” Minns said in his interview.

The Labor leader further voiced his contempt for the law. He declared that while Labor’s anti-protest laws, supposedly introduced in response to last December’s Sydney Bondi

Beach terrorist attack, were ruled unconstitutional by the Court of Appeal, he did not regret them at all.

“My view is that got us through the summer. I wish they were still in place, and I think the decision was wrong, but I’m glad we did it,” Minns said.

The struck-down legislation gave the NSW Police Commissioner the power to issue Public Assembly Restriction Declarations (PARDs), outlawing protests in any part of the state for 14 days at a time.

The Court of Appeal verdict still left open the powers of the state government and the police, under pre-existing legislation, to deny protest permits to specific protests, as they did in banning a march to the Opera House last October to mark the second anniversary of the genocide.

The judgment also left intact the Minns government’s declaration of this February’s visit by Israeli President Isaac Herzog visit as a “major event” under the 2009 Major Events Act, which a NSW Supreme Court judge ruled constitutionally valid even though Labor’s use of the legislation also blocked protests against Herzog.

The Minns government, working in close collaboration with that of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, defied warnings by legal and civil liberties groups about the unconstitutional character of the PARD laws to rush them through the state parliament last December.

It did so on the false pretext of responding to the terrorist shootings at Bondi Beach—accusing the mass anti-genocide rallies and marches across Australia of being responsible for the anti-Jewish atrocity committed by two alleged Islamic extremist gunmen.

Authorised by the Minns government, the police went on a vicious rampage of bashing, pepper-spraying and mass arresting at the Herzog protest, explicitly invoking the now-invalid PARD laws.

Widely circulated footage showed officers punching, pepper-spraying and charging at attendees. Among those whose assaults were recorded was 76-year-old journalist and documentary filmmaker James Ricketson, who was attacked by riot cops and pinned to the ground.

Body-worn police camera footage emerged this week showing a police officer boasting about punching a demonstrator in the head. The officer can be heard saying he “f---king pumped that c---” and “punched him in the head when he was down.” This underscores the viciousness of the police attack authorised by the Minns government.

Albanese, whose federal Labor government has continued to justify the Israeli destruction of Gaza, invited Herzog, even though a United Nations inquiry had found that the Israeli president incited genocide against the Palestinians.

Albanese and other Labor leaders, notably Minns, quickly defended the police violence against the demonstrators. Albanese declared that the protesters had been told they would not be allowed to march, and Minns denounced them as violent, without a skerrick of evidence.

In the following weeks, police in combat gear conducted intimidating early morning raids on homes across Sydney to arrest people alleged to have participated in the Herzog protest.

All the evidence points to the violent police assault and subsequent raids being conducted at the behest of the Labor governments, which were determined to use Herzog’s provocative trip to set a precedent for police-state repression.

Minns’s latest comments are part of an escalating campaign by the Murdoch outlets and other ruling class elements, including former military and intelligence leaders, to insist that the Labor governments go even further.

Last month’s conclusion of public hearings in the Albanese government’s witch-hunting Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion saw demands from these quarters for a greater assault on the mass opposition to the genocide.

In reality, this inquiry has scarcely examined the Bondi Beach atrocity, which triggered the royal commission, including the many unanswered questions about the failure of the intelligence and policing agencies to hinder the two Islamic State-inspired gunmen, despite them having been on terrorism watchlists.

This media and political campaign comes after all the efforts over the past three years by the Labor governments, the corporate media and Zionist groups to paint anti-genocide outrage as antisemitic have been discredited.

Allegations of a wave of antisemitic graffiti and arson attacks across Sydney in late 2024 and early 2025 were demolished. Minns and Albanese had rushed to depict these incidents as acts of antisemitic terrorism. They exploited the incidents to impose far-reaching “hate speech” and “hate group” laws that seek to outlaw opposition to the US-backed Gaza genocide and can be used to criminalise other anti-war or political dissent.

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.

Just last month, after a four-day hearing, NSW Supreme Court justice Desmond Fagan found that one of those convicted

over the incidents, Mohommed Farhat, was “incited and directed” by another person to commit his vandalism for a \$4,000 payment and an unspecified quantity of drugs.

Minns’s interview was given for a book, titled *Bondi Terror*, written by Murdoch media personality Sharri Markson and Alex Ryvchin, the co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, which again seeks to blame anti-genocide demonstrations for the Bondi Beach atrocity.

The book also features an unprecedented private “sit-down” interview with Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) chief Mike Burgess, in which he criticised government leaders for not doing more to crack down on alleged antisemitism, despite his escalating warnings, in one public speech after another, about “extremism.”

As a result, Burgess asserted, antisemitic behaviour became “normalised” and this “increased the permission for politically motivated violence.” He made a pitch for extra funding for the intelligence and police apparatus.

That only raises further questions about ASIO’s seeming failure to detect or prevent the Bondi massacre, under conditions where one of the alleged perpetrators had previously been on the agency’s watchlist. This cannot be explained by a lack of resources. Since the Albanese government took office in 2022, it has boosted ASIO’s budget from \$716.9 million in 2021–22 to over a billion dollars—\$1.081 billion—in 2026–27.

Minns’s latest comments underscore the warning made by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the coordinated police rampage during the Herzog visit was a turning point in Australian politics. By backing the police repression of dissent, regardless of its unconstitutional lawlessness, the Labor governments have reiterated their full support for imperialist war and barbarism, not just in Palestine but globally, and their readiness to tear up basic democratic rights.



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