Australia: Terrorism raids in Sydney raise many questions

Mike Head
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State and federal police and intelligence officers, accompanied by media cameras, staged violent pre-dawn raids on 11 homes across Sydney working-class suburbs last Friday on the pretext of preventing a potential terrorist act.

There are many unanswered questions about the raids, which resulted in three dubious arrests, and only one on terrorism-related offences. But the scale of the operation, following other massive police operations authorised by the New South Wales (NSW) state Labor government this year, point to the use of flimsy terrorism charges to generate a scare campaign to justify police-state measures. This is occurring amid mounting discontent among workers and youth over declining living conditions, the Gaza genocide and war preparations.

From 5 a.m. on Friday, heavily-armed members of the Joint Counter Terrorism Team, comprised of the NSW police, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the domestic political surveillance agency, burst into 11 properties across Sydney's west and south-west, from Campsie to Toongabbie and Campbelltown.

The capitalist media depicted the raids, codenamed Operation Ursino, as a response to an alleged terror attack plot that could be related to last December's killing of 15 people at Sydney's Bondi Beach by two alleged Islamic State-inspired gunmen.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was quick to praise the police and intelligence agencies when he was asked about the raids at a media conference in Shenzhen, China, where he attended an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting. "Australian security agencies are doing good work to defend the interests and safety of Australians," he stated.

However, the only terrorism-related charges, against Nowroz Amin, are vague and tenuous. They refer to the possession of documents and computer material, which the police admitted indicated no timing, location or plan for a terrorist act, and no capability to conduct one.

A court attendance notice alleged that Amin "did collect a document connected with the preparation for a terrorist act knowing of the connection with the preparation for a terrorist act." Another notice claimed that he "did possess or control violent extremist material obtained or accessed using a carriage service, stored in the form of data on a computer or storage device." Media reports indicated that this material related to Islamic State.

At a press conference in Canberra on Friday, AFP deputy commissioner Hilda Sirec said it would be alleged in court that the accused was "researching how to build a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device." Yet, she stated: "We have no information to suggest the alleged offender had identified targets or locations or had obtained the capability for the vehicle-borne improvised explosive device."

A second man was arrested during one of the raids and charged with hindering a police investigation. He pleaded guilty on Friday and was fined $550, and faces no terrorism charges or accusations.

A third man was arrested and charged with acquiring a pistol without a licence or permit while subject to a firearms prohibition order and possessing it in a public space. When he appeared in court on Saturday via a video link his lawyer denied that any pistol or firearm was found during the raid. He said his client had been diagnosed with "complex PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] arising from being assaulted in custody previously."

At Friday's AFP press briefing, Sirec said there was no information to suggest that Amin's alleged offending was connected to the December 14 first anniversary of the Bondi Beach attack, then added: "However, we know the fear that this will cause."

That itself raises questions about whether the police raids were timed to drum up such fear in order to justify the further expansion of police powers and resources by the Labor governments.

Many questions also remain covered up about how the two accused Bondi Beach perpetrators, a father and son, were able to carry out a reactionary atrocity despite being well known to the police and intelligence agencies.

More issues about the timing of Friday's raids were raised

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when it emerged via the pages of the *Australian*, the Murdoch media flagship, that Amin had been under ASIO and police surveillance for years, including via an Android phone issued to him by the AFP in 2023. He had also previously given interviews to the newspaper itself, during which he had denounced the Gaza genocide and the federal government's support for Israel.

Further concerns emerged when it was reported that Amin had previously been jailed on similar charges. In 2018, he was charged with preparing for a terrorist act, based on possession of Islamic State-connected material and plans to travel to Bangladesh. He pleaded guilty in 2021 and was sentenced to five years and four months in prison, despite the judge rejecting the prosecution's assertion he was trying to carry out violent attacks in Australia.

These developments need to be placed in a broader political context.

Together with Albanese's federal Labor government, the Minns government has spearheaded police repression of dissent. On February 9 this year, it authorised a violent police operation in Sydney against a peaceful protest opposing a visit to Australia by Israeli president and war criminal Isaac Herzog. A deployment involving hundreds of police culminated in cops indiscriminately pepper-spraying, bashing and charging at the demonstrators.

Albanese had invited Herzog regardless of a United Nations inquiry finding that the Israeli president incited genocide in Gaza. That was a measure of the Labor government's commitment to US-Israeli war offensives and US militarism globally.

Widely-viewed footage on social media showed multiple assaults perpetrated by the police. Pre-dawn police raids were then conducted on the homes of alleged protest participants, charging them with offences such as refusing to obey police orders to disperse, affray, and assaulting or hindering police.

The Minns government has pursued these charges despite a NSW Court of Appeal ruling that struck down as unconstitutional Labor's Public Assembly Restriction Declaration (PARD) regime that the police had invoked. NSW police later dropped some charges, but continue to prosecute 18 demonstrators, with trials due next year.

This is part of a campaign to conflate anti-genocide protests with terrorism and antisemitism to justify a crackdown on opposition, including the introduction of far-reaching "hate group" laws and more severe foreign interference legislation.

Earlier this month, the Minns government launched an unprecedented shift in policing operations, deploying Armed Response Command (ARC) officers carrying military-grade long-arms on daily patrols for the first time in Australian history. Reportedly the ARC will be operating more visibly on Sydney streets in the lead-up to the Bondi anniversary.

Shortly after the ARC deployment began, NSW police staged another display of force. From November 12 to 15, they conducted Operation Amarok XII—three days of raids on homes across the state, arresting more than 750 people on nearly 1,600 domestic violence charges.

This marks a repressive police response to a social crisis. According to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, the number of domestic violence-related assaults recorded by the NSW police increased from about 32,000 in 2021–22 to 39,000 in 2025–26, with two-thirds of the victims being women.

During that period, the cost of living and housing affordability crisis has intensified, and unemployment has begun rising, placing increased pressure on working-class households. When the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its latest personal safety data last week, it showed that financial pressure has become a significant predictor of household violence, with women who experience cash flow problems at a three times higher risk of experiencing partner violence or abuse.

Instead of tackling the root causes, or providing adequate housing and support services, the Labor government is mounting police raids and mass arrests. The strengthening of the police and intelligence apparatuses is directed, above all, against the working-class discontent that is brewing as the burdens of war are imposed on working people, via the soaring cost of living and cuts to essential disability, health, education and other social programs, while hundreds of billions of dollars are poured into AUKUS and other war plans.

This week, with bipartisan backing, the Albanese Labor government has rushed through parliament a 231-page bill that will ban protests or even media coverage at or near any military-connected activities. It is another clear indication of preparations to join a US-led war against China, and to suppress opposition to such a catastrophic conflict.

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