

Australian government, opposition launch hysterical attacks on the Greens over Gaza genocide

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Over the past week, the Labor government has joined hands with the Liberal-National Coalition opposition to ramp up a campaign targeting opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Rhetoric condemning protests has been dialed up to a new level, with daily assertions that pro-Palestinian activity and sentiment are “dangerous,” based on “misinformation,” and linked to “extremism.”

The immediate target is the Greens. Senior Labor figures, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his key cabinet ministers, have accused them of “complicity” and “collaboration” in protests and of “inflaming community tensions.” The sole basis for these allegations is that the Greens are the only party in parliament to have condemned the killing of tens of thousands in Gaza and to have denounced Labor’s support for the Israeli regime.

There is no doubt that one element is a fear that widespread anger over Labor’s involvement in the genocide will have consequences at the federal election, due next year at the latest.

Media articles over recent months have repeatedly cited unnamed Labor figures warning of a “backlash” over the genocide, particularly in working-class electorates with large Middle Eastern and Muslim populations. Hostility to the Israeli onslaught intersects with widespread anger over the cost-of-living. Recent polling has indicated that Labor’s electoral support is even lower than in the 2022 election, when it scraped into office with less than a third of primary votes in its worst showing since the 1930s. If the polls were to be repeated at an election it would lead to a minority government—a disaster for the ruling class in this country.

More is at play, however. The hysterical attacks on the Greens are part of a bipartisan effort to outlaw opposition not only to the genocide, but to war more broadly. In this, the Greens serve as something of a placeholder for popular opposition. A capitalist party of the upper middle-class, the ruling elites are well aware that the Greens pose no threat, with their primary aspiration being to form a coalition with Labor that would implement the same pro-war and pro-business program currently in place.

Albanese has played the leading role at each major turning

point in the assault on opposition to the genocide. That included frothing declarations in October that protests were antisemitic and Hamas-inspired, coupled with declarations of Israel’s “right to defend itself.”

Over the past month, Albanese has spearheaded the demonisation of protesting students and university encampments, branding them as “divisive” displays of “hatred and ignorance” that “do not have a place” in this society. That was a direct instigation of the Zionist and far-right forces who have repeatedly physically attacked the students, as well as the university administrations that are taking disciplinary measures and even referring their own students to the police.

Again, Albanese is at the forefront. Speaking in parliament on Thursday, he thundered that the Greens had “consciously and deliberately spread” what he called “misinformation.” They had “engaged in demonstrations” outside Labor electorate offices. All of this was “unacceptable,” he declared. “Every one of us has a responsibility to keep our community safe. Social cohesion is a national asset to all of us. All of us have a responsibility to uphold and defend.”

Labor cabinet ministers and their Coalition counterparts then repeated the charges. Bland and colourless career politicians spoke more passionately than ever before, some shouting as though at an enemy.

As is so often the case with official claims of “misinformation,” there is no clear factual basis for Labor’s allegation. The hysterical cries of “misinformation,” are thus themselves an expression of inaccurate or baseless information being promoted.

Albanese and others expressed particular agitation over the “misrepresentation” of motions in parliament. At the beginning of the month, the Greens moved a motion for token recognition of Palestinian statehood. Labor and the Coalition voted it down. Labor has asserted that their vote was not on the issue itself but on a procedural motion that would have facilitated such a vote. They have stated that opposing such procedural motions is standard parliamentary practice.

This is fairly thin gruel. So is Labor’s claim that the Greens are spreading misinformation when they accuse the government

of exporting weapons to Israel. Labor MPs have asserted that no such exports have occurred over the past five years.

However, figures obtained by Declassified Australia under a freedom of information request showed that in the 2022-23 financial year, Labor approved 62 defence exports to Israel, a sharp rise from the previous year's figure of 38. In the current financial year, up to the end of January, 18 exports were recorded.

Labor and the Department of Defence have sought to obfuscate the figures. They no longer provide a breakdown of dual-use items versus those listed as munitions. When such data was provided in previous years, munitions accounted for 80 percent or more of approved defence exports. Labor has also confused the issue by implying that arms exports are only fully assembled machine guns, rocket launchers, and the like, as opposed to parts and other crucial components.

In other words, the Greens' statements are true, and the Labor government is lying to the public.

Albanese and the Labor government have particularly bemoaned the protests outside their electorate offices. Albanese's own has been the subject of a continuous protest since January. The generally small and peaceful protests have been slandered as violent, largely based on a few incidents in which unknown individuals have put up graffiti and engaged in other minor vandalism. No serious incidents have occurred.

Albanese and his ministers have improbably presented their electorate offices as citadels of democracy. The prime minister claimed that disruptions to the offices would hinder members of the public from seeking assistance with welfare and immigration matters.

This is particularly rich, given it is the Labor government that is overseeing brutal attacks on those receiving welfare and is engaged in a frontal assault on the rights of immigrants. More generally, the offices are a means of funnelling public funds to the major parties. They function as campaign headquarters and are staffed by cynical careerists.

While presenting themselves as the victims, the major parties are deliberately trying to whip-up a lynch-mob atmosphere. Coalition leader Peter Dutton, emboldened by Albanese's intervention on Thursday, declared on 2GB radio: "I think that people need to have a conversation with their kids and their grandkids, with their next door neighbours, just about how evil the current Greens party is..." Similar unhinged rhetoric has poured forth from the Murdoch media.

Inevitably, such rhetoric is accompanied by claims that opposition to the genocide is antisemitism. This line, equating anti-Jewish bigotry with opposition to state war crimes, is always a fraud. It is particularly grotesque coming from forces that peddle anti-immigrant chauvinism, bigotry and other forms of backwardness that have always been the kin of genuine antisemites.

The frenzy in parliament underscores Labor's ongoing commitment to the genocide and its determination to suppress

opposition. That itself refutes the posturing of the Laborites, who have, over recent months, claimed to have limited involvement in the genocide despite having backed Israel politically, diplomatically and materially throughout.

Replying on Thursday to the volley of attacks, Greens leader Adam Bandt declared he would not be lectured "from a prime minister and opposition leader who back the invasion of Gaza."

But the Greens' entire strategy throughout the genocide has been to subordinate opposition to moral appeals to Labor. Week after week, they have insisted that "pressure" must be applied to the government to reverse course. That line is now exposed as a bankrupt dead-end.

In reality, Labor's support for the genocide is one component of its participation in a broader eruption of imperialist militarism threatening a new world war. That includes boosting Australia's contribution to the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine to more than a billion dollars, most of it in arms. And above all, it has entailed completing the country's transformation into a frontline state for a US-led conflict with China.

Such a program is incompatible with democratic rights. The government has repeatedly insisted that the military build-up must be a "whole-of-nation" effort, which means the suppression of opposition.

For their part, the Greens have explicitly backed the US war against Russia, while legitimising its aggression against China. This is an international phenomenon, with the German Greens, for instance, holding the foreign ministry in a government centrally involved in the Ukraine war, which has also outlawed most opposition to the Gaza genocide.

To defend democratic rights and to fight against genocide and war, it is necessary to build a movement of the working class independent of all the parliamentary parties, including the Greens, and directed against the source of conflict, the capitalist system that they defend.



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