

Australian Labor leaders seize on Sydney graffiti to activate police-state powers targeting anti-genocide protests

Mike Head
10 December 2024

Without waiting for any evidence as to who was responsible, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Labor government's key ministers this morning rushed to brand as "another antisemitic attack" the overnight setting alight of a car and the spraying of anti-Israel graffiti in Sydney.

Before anything was even known about the identity of the individuals who torched the car and scrawled graffiti, including "Kill Israel" [sic], on a house fence and two cars, Albanese insisted that this was a "hate crime" directed against all Jews and requiring a major state response.

Whatever the motivations of those involved—and that is totally unclear—the actions against cars and houses in the suburb of Woollahra are essentially reactionary. They provide another pretext for the activation of police-state powers directed against the hundreds of thousands of people across Australia who have been demonstrating for 14 months against the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Such acts also serve to divert attention away from the still-escalating atrocities, mass killings and war crimes being committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and throughout Syria, where the Netanyahu government is now conducting hundreds of air strikes—all backed by the imperialist powers, including the Albanese government.

The police said today they were looking for two people, aged between 15 and 20, who were allegedly in the area during the attack on the car and house fence. But Albanese made another bellicose political intervention to proclaim this as an antisemitic act.

This morning, Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio he had already spoken to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) chief Reece Kershaw and would be

briefed by officials of "Operation Avalite."

That is the joint federal-state-intelligence agency taskforce "to investigate threats, violence and hatred towards the Australian Jewish community and parliamentarians" that Albanese dramatically announced on Monday after a firebomb had been thrown into the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne on Friday.

In that case too, the Labor government and the entire political and media establishment pre-empted, and in fact prejudiced, the necessary investigation into and possible prosecution of whoever was responsible. Albanese branded the synagogue attack as "terrorist" before the relevant police authorities had made any such designation.

Now, once again, the major political parties and the corporate media have seized upon the car torching and graffiti to ramp up their demonisation, as antisemites, of opponents of the Israeli genocide.

Considerable doubt surrounds the latest incident, as with the synagogue firebombing and an earlier car torching in Woollahra on November 21. Police say there are three suspects in the synagogue case, but no-one has been charged. Two men have been charged with more than 20 offences each after the November 21 attack.

Albanese was not alone in his belligerent allegations. A roll call of his government's cabinet ministers, including Chris Bowen, Tony Burke, Jason Clare, Tanya Plibersek and Penny Wong, rushed to make similar statements, as did New South Wales state Labor Premier Chris Minns and their counterparts in the Liberal-National Coalition.

Albanese went further in an opinion piece published this morning in the *Melbourne Age* and other Nine network newspapers. He conflated the still-unexplained incidents in Australia with both the Nazi Holocaust and last year's largely Hamas-led Palestinian military operation. "Ever since the atrocities of October 7, Jewish Australians have

been confronted with fresh reminders of that old grief and pain,” Albanese wrote after referring to Holocaust survivors.

Consistent with his government’s record for the past 14 months, Albanese made no reference to the decades of Zionist oppression of the Palestinian people and the genocidal mass murder, forcible displacement, and deliberate starvation of the Palestinians in Gaza by Israel, as documented by Amnesty International in an exhaustive 296-page report last week.

On Monday, Albanese convened the cabinet National Security Committee and then held a media conference, flanked by AFP chief Kershaw, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) Director-General Mike Burgess, Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus and Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke to launch Operation Avalite.

This taskforce mirrors the demand issued over the weekend by Coalition leader Peter Dutton for such a police-spy agency mobilisation. It activates all the “counter-terrorism” powers imposed by the Howard Coalition government, with Labor’s bipartisan support, during the “war on terrorism” that accompanied the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 onward.

These include ASIO or AFP detention and interrogation without trial, supposedly to obtain information, investigate or prevent acts of terrorism or “politically-motivated violence,” as well as sweeping arrest, search and seizure powers.

In an AFP media release on Monday, Kershaw gave some indication of the far-reaching potential of this operation to be used to harass, outlaw and suppress anti-genocide protests, as well as wider political dissent and social unrest.

“Investigators will leverage the national counter terrorism arrangements, in particular work with state and territory police,” Kershaw stated. The operation would “unlock the powers and capabilities” of the AFP, ASIO and state police.

Kershaw declared: “The AFP will not tolerate crimes that undermine Australia’s security or our way of life.” That is a wide-ranging threat to move against anyone designated as a danger to the existing economic, social and political order.

This offensive is being mounted in league with Zionist leaders, whose accusations have been particularly promoted by the Murdoch media outlets, even invoking the extraordinary spectre of pogrom-style efforts to drive Jews from Australia.

In a statement this morning, Executive Council of

Australian Jewry co-chief executive Alex Ryvchin said the Australian Jewish community had awoken to scenes of “terror and devastation.” He claimed it was “another act intended to terrorise us, drive us from our country and make our fellow Australians fearful of associating with us.”

Zionist leaders echoed Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu—a war criminal evading an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court—in linking the attacks to the ongoing protests across Australia against the Israeli genocide.

Zionist Federation of Australia CEO Alon Cassuto stated: “Chants of ‘Globalise the Intifada’ on our streets and campuses are translating into real-world hate. Antisemitism, disguised as anti-Zionism, threatens Jews, social cohesion, democracy, and the rule of law.”

Like Netanyahu, Cassuto also blamed the “domestic terrorism” on the Albanese government’s “drastic shifts on longstanding policy on Israel.” Netanyahu had denounced the government’s vote for a toothless UN resolution urging Israel to “bring an end to its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as rapidly as possible.”

Only a handful of countries, along with Israel and the US, voted against that resolution, which restated the illegality of Israel’s occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In reality, the Labor government has backed the Israeli genocide from the outset. Albanese has labelled peaceful anti-genocide university encampments as “hateful” displays and state Labor governments have repeatedly threatened to ban pro-Palestinian protests. Such threats will now intensify.

The Zionist and Labor leaders’ continued conflation of opposition to the genocide and antisemitism is itself antisemitic. It associates Jews with the militarist Israeli state as it commits gross atrocities, armed and financed by Washington and all the other imperialist powers, despite the opposition of many Jews in Israel and around the world.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact