

Submission from the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council on the Inquiry into Extremist Movements and Radicalism in Australia

INTRODUCTION

In the five-plus years since Australia's Counter-Terrorism Strategy *Strengthening our Resilience* was published, much has changed, but equally, much has remained the same.

Many of the terrorism challenges posed in the post-September 11 world persist. Radical Islamism, from both the Sunni and Shi'ite persuasions, continues to inspire young people to plan and carry out violent acts. Far-right extremists, including white supremacists, have not renounced their views of racial superiority and some continue to express themselves violently. Countering extremism in the community continues to be a challenge for police and community leaders. This is what has remained the same.

There are a number of features that have exacerbated or super-charged these challenges in recent years. These features include the proliferation and ease of accessibility to social media and the failure of digital media companies to deny extremists an audience. Another significant feature is the growth in the "lone wolf" phenomenon, where individuals perpetrate political violence without being prepared or commanded by others.

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) is the premier independent public affairs organisation for the Australian Jewish community and conveys the interests of the Australian Jewish community to government, media and other community organisations.

The purpose of this submission to the Inquiry into Extremist Movements and Radicalism in Australia is to highlight to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security threats posed by groups not currently included on Australia's list of terrorist groups. This submission also provides recommendations for the Committee to consider in order to strengthen Australia's national interest and best protect all Australians, including Jewish Australians.

It is essential to note that extremism is transnational. Extremism needs to be addressed in concert with Australia's international allies and international institutions. We note that AIJAC has strong ties with important international organisations and high-quality researchers and that we can assist the development of Australian policy through these connections.

The Australian Jewish community is particularly sensitive to terrorism of all varieties given individuals and groups from across the extremist spectrum have repeatedly highlighted Jews as a desirable target. This submission details the threats perceived to be most aggressively targeting Australian Jewish people and institutions – Hezbollah, Hizb ut-Tahrir and far-right extremists. This has resulted in threats of violence and actual harassment against Australian Jews (see ECAJ Antisemitism Report 2020 for extended detail¹).

Current laws regarding “terrorist organisations”

Australia's laws against terrorism are contained in Part 5.3 of the Schedule to the *Criminal Code Act 1995*, the *Criminal Code*.

In Australia, a “terrorist organisation” is an organisation that a court finds is directly or indirectly engaged in preparing, planning, assisting or fostering the doing of a terrorist act; or the government has listed as a terrorist organisation by regulation.

The Australian Government can list an organisation as a terrorist organisation if the Minister for Home Affairs is satisfied that it is engaged in preparing, planning, assisting or fostering the doing of a terrorist act or advocates the doing of a terrorist act.

An organisation advocates the doing of a terrorist act if it directly or indirectly counsels, promotes, encourages or urges the doing of a terrorist act; gives instruction on the doing of a terrorist act; and/or directly praises the doing of a terrorist act, where there is a substantial risk that this praise might lead someone to engage in a terrorist act.

The Government can list an organisation for three years. The Minister for Home Affairs may also add or remove the name of an alias to a listed terrorist organisation. The Minister for Home Affairs' decision to list an organisation as a terrorist organisation or add or remove the name of an alias is reviewed by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

It is an offence in Australia to be a member of a terrorist organisation, direct the activities of one, recruit for one, train or receive training from, or participate in training with one, acquire funds for, from or to one, provide support to one, or be associated with a listed terrorist organisation.

¹ Nathan, J. “Executive Council of Australian Jewry report on antisemitism in Australia 2020” (20 Nov 2020) <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Antisemitism-Report-2020.pdf>

Current laws regarding “terrorist acts”

A “terrorist act” is an act, or a threat to act, that meets both these criteria:

- it intends to coerce or influence the public or any government by intimidation to advance a political, religious or ideological cause; and
- it causes one or more of the following:
 - death, serious harm or danger to a person
 - serious damage to property
 - a serious risk to the health or safety of the public
 - serious interference with, disruption to, or destruction of critical infrastructure such as a telecommunications or electricity network.

Advocating, protesting, dissenting or taking industrial action are not terrorist acts where the person doing the activity does not intend to cause serious harm to a person or create a serious risk to public safety.

Anyone guilty of committing a terrorist act could face up to life imprisonment.

Counter-terrorism experts, including Labor MP Anne Aly, argue that Australia could ban far-right groups under the current terrorism legislation.²

Alternatively, it could adopt the UK approach which includes as terrorism, violence committed on racial grounds, and those who “glorify” terrorism.³ Moreover, the US definition of domestic terrorism incorporates race as it states: “Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.”

Submission recommendations

It is highly regrettable that the Jewish community in Australia remains a target for violent extremists acting in the name of a range of dangerous causes. The purpose of AIJAC’s submission is to highlight the extent of those threats and encourage the Government to work even harder to seek to prevent harm being caused to any Australian individual or community.

² McGowan, M. “How Australia's anti-terror regime has failed to rein in far-right extremists”, *The Guardian* (16 Jan 2021), <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/16/how-australias-anti-terror-regime-has-failed-to-rein-in-far-right-extremists>

³ UK Home Office. “Proscribed terrorist Organisations” (17 July 2020), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/901434/20200717_Proscription.pdf

Due to the nature of violent extremism and terrorism, this submission proposes a mixed approach that combines enhanced legislative tools, with educational programs:

- AIJAC urges legislators to implement a consistent and comprehensive approach to the proscription of terrorist groups to ensure Australia is not seen as a destination for criminal behaviour that supports terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah.
- AIJAC urges the committee to consider whether the use of disallowable instruments in relation to listing terrorist organisation functions in the way intended. If a decision is subject to disallowance – as is the case in the listing of organisations under section 102 of the *Criminal Code*– then AIJAC recommends, as it assumes is the case, that any minister ensures the advice of the committee reviewing the decision is considered.
- AIJAC recommends the committee consider introducing measures to ensure that, as is anticipated is already the case, relevant ministers take into account the full scope of advice available to them when making decisions to proscribe terrorist groups, including the informed input of the PJCIS and the actions taken by Australia’s closest allies.
- AIJAC urges the Government to classify far-right groups that promote or organise violence as terror organisations, as the failure to do so may enable them to continue to grow and recruit in Australia and could lead to future terror attacks.
- AIJAC recommends the Government consider an amendment to the *Crimes Act 1914* to explicitly prohibit violence, incitement and the glorification of violence against a racial or religious group. This will assist in providing a legal remedy for groups and individuals that seek to harm Australians but fall short of the legislative threshold for proscription. This is relevant to a range of extremist groups, including Hizb ut-Tahrir and far-right groups and movements.
- AIJAC suggests the Government act on the lessons from the New Zealand Royal Commission⁴ into the Christchurch massacre and increase counter-terrorism funding and attention towards addressing far-right extremism. This includes monitoring extremist individuals and groups, and ongoing funding towards the security of vulnerable communities.
- AIJAC urges the Government to demonstrate national leadership in condemning far-right extremism when it appears.

⁴ New Zealand Royal Commission “Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019” (8 Dec 2020), <https://apo.org.au/node/309951>

- AIJAC recommends the Government develop a new national anti-extremism strategy to counter extremism in Australian society.
- AIJAC recommends the escalation of multilateral dialogue addressing these challenges, in addition to using and developing domestic tools to combat the ability of extremist ideologies to produce terrorist outcomes.

In the sections below, AIJAC will consider these recommendations in the context of three case studies: Australia's treatment of Hezbollah, Australia's response to the Islamist extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, and the ongoing and increasingly challenging threat posed by far-right extremists. This submission also briefly discusses the challenges in this area posed by the internet, before concluding on the need for a counter-terrorism eco-system.

HEZBOLLAH

Recommendations

- AIJAC urges legislators to implement a consistent and comprehensive approach to the proscription of terrorist groups to ensure Australia is not seen as a destination for criminal behaviour that supports terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah.
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Hezbollah today

Hezbollah (also Hizballah) is “Iran’s multi-purpose tool”, according to Jeffrey Feltman⁵, former US Ambassador to Lebanon and former chairperson of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Force.

Hezbollah is directed by Iranian ayatollahs and a “force multiplier” for the Iranian regime. It is a domestic Lebanese political force with a militia far stronger than the Lebanon Armed Forces. Hezbollah is responsible for the murder of more than 300 Americans, plus dozens of other international citizens. It is a key threat to Israel, the Middle East’s only democracy – and this threat is increasing with the supply, by Iran, of precision guided missiles.

Hezbollah is also designated by many jurisdictions as a terrorist organisation. Australia’s Five Eye allies, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, all proscribe the group in its entirety. Joining these three key nations are the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Paraguay and others. Argentina – a country that knows too well the terror capabilities of Hezbollah after the group blew up a Jewish centre in 1994, killing 85 and injuring 300, and attacked the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, killing 29 including school children and residents of a nearby nursing home – has also deemed Hezbollah a terrorist group⁶.

⁵ Feltman, J. “Hezbollah: Revolutionary Iran’s most successful export”, *The Brookings Institution* (17 Jan 2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/hezbollah-revolutionary-irans-most-successful-export/>

⁶ “Argentina designates Hezbollah as terrorist organisation”, *BBC* (18 July 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49030561>

Since 2003, the Australian Government has listed Hezbollah's External Security Organisation (ESO) as a terrorist organisation under Division 102 – Terrorist Organisations of the *Criminal Code*. The organisation's listing is current. AIJAC has previously made submissions to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security and to other government authorities and inquiries on the listing of Hezbollah's ESO. These submissions have all provided evidence to the committee on why AIJAC strongly believes Australia should list the entirety of the Hezbollah as a terrorist entity, not just the ESO.

Regrettably, the listing of the ESO has not stopped Australians from openly supporting Hezbollah, Hezbollah from committing criminal offences on Australian soil or Australians from being recruited to serve the group. In addition, decisions by Australian communications authorities to allow Hezbollah-linked TV network *Al Manar* to continue broadcasting into Australia over satellite networks for the past two decades have not contributed to public safety.

AIJAC notes that in 2018, the PJCS recommended to the Minister for Home Affairs that he extend Australia's proscription of Hezbollah's ESO to the entirety of the group's military wing⁷. The Committee noted that "the proscription of the ESO is now somewhat inconsistent with the approach taken by some of Australia's closest partners: Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States." The Minister for Home Affairs did not accept the recommendation.

By law, the decision to list a terrorist organisations is subject to disallowance. While in the vast majority of reviews, the committee supports the Minister's decision, in this case, it did not. In national security legislation, strong oversight is essential. By extension, AIJAC recommends the committee considers whether the disallowable instrument acts as intended in this area and considers whether reform is necessary.

In February 2020, following media reporting on Sydneysider Ali Haider, a convicted criminal with a history of supporting Hezbollah, Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton told journalists he would receive "some briefings" on Hezbollah, noting that a decision to extend the proscription of Hezbollah was based on "facts that aren't publicly available"⁸. AIJAC is unaware of any legislative changes taking place as a result of those briefings.

⁷ Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. "Review of the re-listing of Hizballah's External Security Organisation as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code" (June 2018), https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Intelligence_and_Security/Relisting_of_Hizballahs_ESO/Report

⁸ Visontay, E. "Nobody should have sympathy for Hezbollah: Peter Dutton", *The Australian* (25 Feb 2020), <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/nobody-should-have-sympathy-for-hezbollah-peter-dutton/news-story/cc878eb46b657f6f683e091b89fd5b54>

It is essential to note that experts in the field, as well as Hezbollah representatives themselves, argue it is a fallacy that Hezbollah operates through standalone or isolated wings.

In 2012, Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem said, “We don't have a military wing and a political one; we don't have Hezbollah on one hand and the resistance party on the other...Every element of Hezbollah, from commanders to members as well as our various capabilities, is in the service of the resistance, and we have nothing but the resistance as a priority.”

In October 2017, the Director of the US National Counter-terrorism Centre Nicholas Rasmussen backed Qassem’s assessment: “Make no mistake – Hezbollah has no political wing. It is a single organisation, a terrorist organisation, and it is rotten to the core.”

Given this evidence, and the willingness of the Minister to announce he would reconsider the listing when new information was made available, AIJAC recommends the committee review whether the Minister for Home Affairs takes account of all evidence in a proportionate manner. It is necessary that all available information, from local and international sources, be considered by the Minister.

The remainder of this section of AIJAC’s submission will canvass recent developments in this area, rather than revisiting past arguments. These developments provide yet more reasons why the Australian Government should review and extend Hezbollah’s listing in order to comply with the *Criminal Code* and to protect Australia’s national interest.

The nature of the threat posed by Hezbollah, including Hezbollah’s demonstrated capacity for planning and executing violence in the Middle East and beyond, meets the threshold for listing under Division 102 – Terrorist Organisations of the *Criminal Code*. It is therefore inconsistent that Australia has proscribed only Hezbollah’s ESO.

Hezbollah’s recent activity in Australia

As revealed by open-source intelligence, for more than 20 years, Hezbollah has recruited Australian citizens and had a presence on Australian territory. This submission will document Hezbollah’s local activity since the most recent review of the Hezbollah ESO by the PJCIS.

April 2019 - The US Department of Treasury designated Lebanese national Kassem Chams and the Chams Money Laundering Organization as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers

noting both Chams and the organisation were “an affiliated network” of Hezbollah⁹. Chams moved money for Hezbollah through a range of countries, Australia included, according to the US Treasury. In announcing this designation, Sigal Mandelker from the US Treasury said the designation allowed the US to target Hezbollah’s criminal network, which operates as a “logistic, procurement and financing arm” for the rest of the organisation.

July 2019 - A fact sheet produced by the US Department of Homeland Security outlined some of Hezbollah’s recruitment methods. As well as the predictable recruitment tools of social media, coercion and cash incentives, Hezbollah also targets those with familial ties to its home-base, Lebanon, including, according to the US Department of Homeland Security, dual Australian-Lebanese citizens¹⁰. According to the 2016 Australian Census, there were 230, 869 Australians with Lebanese heritage¹¹.

September 2020 - A Bulgarian court sentenced dual Australian-Lebanese citizen Meliad Farah in absentia to life in prison for complicity in an act of terrorism¹². The court confirmed that Farah was linked to Hezbollah and had assisted in the bombing of a busload of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in 2012, which killed five people. Disturbingly, Farah remains unaccounted for, so could still be active on behalf of Hezbollah¹³.

These are just a small number of the many links that Hezbollah operatives have to Australia. AIJAC reiterates that it is incumbent on the Australian Government to expand the proscription of the group to prevent Hezbollah from perceiving Australia as a safe place to recruit, raise funds or even plan future attacks.

Designating the whole group, rather than just the ESO, will assist law enforcement to link Hezbollah’s criminal activity - for example its fundraising efforts via for example drug trafficking and money laundering - with Hezbollah’s objective, i.e. funding its military activities.

⁹ U.S. Department of the Treasury. “Treasury Sanctions Lebanese Money Launderer Kassem Chams Who Moves Money on Behalf of Narcotics Trafficking Organizations and Hizballah” (11 April 2019), https://dl.airtable.com/attachments/be232d89de4265b474e84c47d568b954/1e78cb17/TreasurySanctionsLebaneseMoneyLaundererKassemChamsWhoMovesMoneyonBehalfofNarcoticsTraffickingOrganizationsandHizballah_U.S.DepartmentoftheTreasury.pdf

¹⁰ US Homeland Security - Counterterrorism Mission Center. “Worldwide Terrorist Operations Linked to Lebanese Hizballah or Iran: Observed Behaviors and Key Indicators of Suspicious Activities” (15 July 2019), <https://dl.airtable.com/attachments/db5f1ce0f39cc0a8d0871a461e926dc1/f1688894/DHSJuly2019ReferenceAid.pdf>

¹¹ “Cultural Atlas - Lebanese Culture: Lebanese in Australia”, *SBS* (n.d.),

<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/lebanese-culture/lebanese-culture-lebanese-in-australia>

¹² “Bulgaria court convicts two over 2012 Burgas bus attack on Israelis”, *BBC* (21 Sep 2020),

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54240101>

¹³ Harely, N. “Terrorists on the run sentenced to life for Hezbollah bus bombing”, *The National News* (21 Sep 2020), <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/terrorists-on-the-run-sentenced-to-life-for-hezbollah-bus-bombing-1.1080961>

This is not just AIJAC's opinion, this is the experience of law enforcement in the European Union. A Europol report published in 2020 – "European Union: Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020"¹⁴ noted the following:

The Lebanon-based Shi'i extremist organisation Hezbollah (Hizb Allah, 'Party of God') – whose military wing is listed a terrorist organisation by the EU – is suspected of trafficking diamonds and drugs and of money laundering via the trade in second-hand cars. Capital is sent to Lebanon through the banking system but also through physical transport of cash via commercial aviation. Investigations face the difficulty of demonstrating that the funds collected are channelled to the military wing of the organisation.

Europol is identifying a key problem: because only the military wing of Hezbollah is proscribed in Europe, police must prove that Hezbollah is spending the money raised through its criminal behaviour on a bullet or bombmaking equipment. Obviously, money is fungible, making it virtually impossible to prove that requirement.

In Australia that "difficulty" is amplified even further because Australia currently does not even go so far as Europe in proscribing the so-called Military Wing and only bans the ESO.

Other countries that have recently upgraded their listing of Hezbollah

In 2019, the United Kingdom extended its listing to designate all of Hezbollah. In 2020, Germany did the same. Australia would be wise to seek counsel from these countries – both of which have significant experience with domestic terrorism and make thorough, informed decisions – in considering the current treatment of Hezbollah.

Hans-Georg Engelke, State Secretary at Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior, estimated that in 2020 in Germany, there were approximately 1000 Hezbollah sympathisers who clandestinely organised in associations, participated in online activity and used Germany "as a safe haven, as a base for recruitment and collecting of funds."¹⁵ Engelke also confirmed that prior to extending the designation, German authorities had seized ammonium nitrate, a key bombmaking component, from Hezbollah associates in Germany.

In April 2020, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer announced a ban on all Hezbollah-related activities in the country, while at the same time German police raided four mosques allegedly associated with Hezbollah.¹⁶ The ban made it easier for German authorities to take action against the group.

¹⁴ Europol. "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2020" (2020), <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020>

¹⁵ American Jewish Committee. "Enough is Enough: The Case for Banning Hezbollah - AJC Advocacy Anywhere" (17 Sep 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpRMYS7AZY>

¹⁶ "German government bans Hezbollah — Interior Ministry", DW (30 Apr 2020), <https://www.dw.com/en/german-government-bans-hezbollah-interior-ministry/a-53287126>

Explaining the decision, Engelke outlined the deliberation over extending the proscription, explaining that while Hezbollah may run straightforward social services, like hospitals, in Lebanon, this did not permit German authorities to overlook Hezbollah's deadly terrorism.

"We had activities of an association here collecting money for Hezbollah purposes, the discussion in Germany was Hezbollah is an organisation that runs hospitals etc., how could you tell whether the money collected here is being used for charity purposes or not. We said we didn't mind, that was our argument, we don't mind, any Euro, any dollar, any whatever that is being raised in Germany and goes to Hezbollah, being a terrorist organisation, serves a terrorist purpose."¹⁷

In the case of Britain, the UK Government proscribed the ESO in 2001. It then saw fit to expand that proscription to the Military Wing in 2008¹⁸, then, in February 2019, determined that a distinction between Hezbollah's military and political wings was no longer possible. The UK Government of Theresa May therefore decided to list the entirety of the organisation as a terrorist entity.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said at the time:

"It is clear the distinction between Hezbollah's military and political wings does not exist, and by proscribing Hezbollah in all its forms, the government is sending a clear signal that its destabilising activities in the region are totally unacceptable and detrimental to the UK's national security."

The UK went even further in early 2020 when its Treasury extended terrorism financing rules over the entirety of Hezbollah¹⁹.

Sajid Javid, the UK Home Secretary in 2019, provided a more detailed explanation to an online audience late in 2020. The distinction, he admitted, between Hezbollah's wings is an "elegant lie" and the arguments in Britain against banning all of Hezbollah were "nonsense arguments".²⁰

He noted "I would also like to see the Australians, our friends in New Zealand, and others follow through [with proscribing all of Hezbollah]."

The very recent experiences of both the United Kingdom and Germany must be closely considered by the committee in making recommendations on the effectiveness of the Government's current proscription regime.

Weakness of arguments against expanded proscription

¹⁷ American Jewish Committee. Enough is Enough (2020).

¹⁸ UK Home Office. Proscribed terrorist Organisations (2020).

¹⁹ "UK Treasury freezes Hezbollah assets", *The Jewish Chronicle* (20 Jan 2020), <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/uk-treasury-freezes-hezbollah-assets-1.495587>

²⁰ American Jewish Committee. Enough is Enough (2020).

Designating all of Hezbollah will harm Australia's bilateral ties with Lebanon

Some analysts posit that extending Australia's designation of Hezbollah will harm Australia's bilateral ties with Lebanon. However, significant research – both qualitative and quantitative – has indicated that countries have been able to maintain fruitful relationships with the Lebanese Government, while also avoiding the ethical gymnastics of splitting Hezbollah into non-existent wings.

Distinguished Israeli diplomat Ron Prosor (former Israeli Ambassador to the UN, former Israeli Ambassador to the UK, former director-general of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs) explained the rationale behind countries delineating Hezbollah into wings for the purpose of designation.

*“The idea in the past is that Hezbollah is a designated terrorist organisation because they have proved that they are doing terror all over the world, but there was this differentiation, a completely artificial differentiation between the political arm and the military arm in order to allow countries to engage and work with Hezbollah as if they are not a terrorist organisation.”*²¹

He went on: “the idea of this artificial differentiation is, of course, a British idea with a background of saying ‘let's find ways to work with Hezbollah, which is legit’.”

Prosor's Abba Eban Institute in Israel undertook research in 2019 looking at the effect on a country's bilateral relations with Lebanon of designating Hezbollah²².

It considered three parameters: the disbursement of humanitarian aid, official development assistance (ODA) and trade relations. While the research did not encompass every aspect of a bilateral relationship with Lebanon, the researchers posited that the parameters they selected were indicative of trends.

The Abba Eban Institute's research showed that over a 20-year period (1997-2017), countries – including Australia – that designated parts of Hezbollah as terrorist organisations maintained strong bilateral relationship with Lebanon.

The research concluded: “There are no significant statistical findings to support the claim that the act of designation of Hezbollah has a negative effect on the long-term economic relationship between the designating country and Lebanon. The same conclusion can be drawn regarding humanitarian aid and ODA.”

That's the qualitative research, let's turn to the quantitative research.

²¹ "Counterbalance with Michael Doran: Pursuing Hezbollah in Europe" (4 June 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5Y-VxNCL8o>

²² Cohen, D. "The Impact of Hezbollah Designation as a Terrorist Organization on Economic Ties and Humanitarian Aid to Lebanon", *The Abba Eban Institute for International Diplomacy* (Dec 2019), https://cf0909f1-a183-41fd-a688-2fa0d7ca2267.filesusr.com/ugd/163650_aa36f2c7c7894afba4e12c3d7ae48d00.pdf

According to former British Home Secretary Sajid Javid, since banning all of Hezbollah, the UK has maintained strong ties with Lebanon.

Javid acknowledged that Hezbollah is well integrated into the Lebanese political system and acknowledged that there was reluctance in Britain's Foreign Office to cease contact with Hezbollah-linked officials. But he said of the eventual decision to extend the proscription of Hezbollah: "The relationship with Lebanon is as strong as ever. The international development program we have, we had to recalibrate some of them, stop one or two of them and invest in others, that work continues."²³

Javid detailed that British diplomats were provided with a three-month grace period to cease working with Hezbollah in Lebanon, including on humanitarian programs, before the announcement was made.

"Once pushed to do it, they did it," Javid said.²⁴

Hezbollah assists Australia in the fight against Sunni militants

Hezbollah is active militarily in the Middle East, but it certainly does not play a peace-making role. Despite this, some analysts have suggested that proscribing Hezbollah may harm Australia's interests in combatting Sunni violent extremism. This does not appear to be grounded in facts.

There is no doubt that it is in Australia's interests to see the decline – even the defeat – of Sunni radicalism and terrorism in the Middle East and beyond. But Hezbollah is not Australia's partner in this regard.

In December 2020, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah boasted that his group had doubled its arsenal of precision guided missiles and could use them to strike anywhere in Israel.²⁵

Hezbollah has been militarily active in Syria for the duration of the civil war in support of Bashar al-Assad, however it is most accurate to say Hezbollah does the bidding of its patron, Iran, in Syria. And while Hezbollah militants have been involved in actions against ISIS, as former UK Home Secretary Javid said, "Our enemy's enemy is not our friend. They are both terrorist groups."

Particularly with the demise of ISIS in the region, it is impossible to find open-source evidence that indicates it is *essential* to maintain good relations with Hezbollah in order to protect Australia's obvious national interest in combatting Sunni terrorism.

²³ American Jewish Committee. Enough is Enough (2020).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ "Lebanon: Hezbollah claims to have doubled its precision-guided missiles in a year", *Middle East Monitor* (29 Dec 2020), <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201229-lebanon-hezbollah-claims-to-have-doubled-its-precision-guided-missiles-in-a-year/>

HIZB UT-TAHRIR

Recommendations

- AIJAC recommends the Government consider an amendment to the *Crimes Act* to explicitly prohibit violence, incitement or the glorification of violence against a racial or religious group. This will assist in providing a legal remedy for groups and individuals that seek to harm Australians but fall short of the legislative threshold for proscription. While this recommendation is presented in the context of Sunni Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, it also applies to extremism across the board.
- AIJAC recommends the Government develop a new national anti-extremism strategy to counter extremism in Australian society, including from groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Founded in 1953, Hizb Ut-Tahrir (HT) is a pan-Islamic fundamentalist movement with branches in more than 50 countries, including Australia. The movement calls for the re-establishment of a global Muslim Caliphate based on Islamic religious law (Sharia), while rejecting the integration of Muslims into non-Muslim societies. The movement is banned in Indonesia, Germany, Russia, China, Pakistan and most Arab countries.

Ismail Al-Wahwah (Abu Anas) is the leader of HT's Australian branch, with hundreds of active members and many more followers. On social media, in mosques and in public gatherings, Al-Wahwah and other HT Australia members openly promote violence and war, spread misinformation, antisemitism and conspiracy theories, call for the destruction of the State of Israel and for murder of Jews and engage in Holocaust denial.

Using a variety of channels and methods, HT Australia spreads hatred and misinformation, and urges the use of violence, terror and war, specifically targeting Jews.

HT leaders, for example²⁶:

- Refused to categorically condemn ISIS, and at the same time threatened to “send our troops to Australia, to France to Germany” in response to the war on ISIS.

²⁶ Middle East Media Research Institute. “Friday Sermon by Australian Islamic Scholar Ismail Al-Wahwah: The Jews Exaggerate the Holocaust for Dirty Political Exploitation; Islam Will Conquer Rome and Moscow” (Jan 24 2020), <https://www.memri.org/tv/ismail-wahwah-hizb-tahrir-australia-imprisoned-jordan-holocaust-imposed-world-silence-israel-crimes-islam-victorious> ; Middle East Media Research Institute, “Australian Islamist Leaders Incite to Jihad to Expel Jews from Palestine” (July 24 2014), <https://www.memri.org/tv/australian-islamist-leaders-incite-jihad-expel-jews-palestine> ; R. Porat, “The hateful rhetoric of Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia”, *Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council* (6 Oct 2020) <https://aijac.org.au/australia-israel-review/the-hateful-rhetoric-of-hizb-ut-tahrir-australia/> ; R. Porat, “Yet more extremist voices in Australia exposed”, *Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council* (December 18 2020), <https://aijac.org.au/australia-israel-review/yet-more-extremist-voices-in-australia-exposed/> ; A. Shapiro, “Anti-Israel conspiracy theorists try to link Israel with Beirut port blast”, *Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council* (12 Aug 2020), <https://aijac.org.au/fresh-air/anti-israel-conspiracy-theorists-try-to-link-israel-with-beirut-port-blast/> .

- Repeatedly call for the destruction of the State of Israel and the expulsion of the Jews from it: “the Jewish entity is cancer. And cancer, you have to get rid of it!”, calling on Muslim soldiers to unite and be killed attacking Israel, and promising “it will not take us two weeks to free the land of Filastin [Palestine]! So easy!”
- Publicly express antisemitic views to their audiences: “The Jews will not thrive and will not live in safety, because they are the slayers of the prophets [...] They are people with hearts of stone. Wherever the Jews thrive, corruption abounds. All the power in the hands of the Israelites was based on corruption - corruption in the media, moral corruption, financial corruption, political corruption, corruption in everything that is associated with the Jews.”
- Engage in Holocaust denial, publicly stating that “The only holocaust is the one that [the Jews] claim, exaggerate, blow out of proportion, lie about, and milk [the West] over in order to accomplish their goals.”
- Spread conspiracy theories, claiming for example that Qassem Soleimani, the Iranian military commander killed by the US in 2020, was an American agent and that Israel was behind the Beirut port explosion; also suggesting that Islamist terror attacks in the West are actually masterminded by the governments of these countries.

Over the past two decades, requests have been made for HT Australia to be proscribed as a terrorist group in Australia. In 2007, then Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock said the views of HT Australia were “inimicable with a liberal democratic society” but that the group did not meet the Commonwealth’s criteria for banning²⁷. The Australian Government re-considered the status of the organisation in 2015²⁸ but again decided against proscribing HT Australia. The matter was again raised in 2017 and then-Attorney-General George Brandis said the Government would keep the organisation “carefully under review”. Brandis told media that ASIO was asked to “refresh” its advice on HT Australia but the advice came back that the group did not “meet the threshold”²⁹.

Each time there have been public calls for HT Australia to be proscribed, the Attorney-General of the day has publicly imputed that the advice provided by intelligence services is that the criteria for proscription has not been met. This may be so, however it is impossible for AIJAC to test this given the classified nature of that intelligence. What has not been addressed by successive governments is the continued sense of threat that the Australian Jewish community experiences while HT Australia can operate openly in Australia.

Amendment to the Crimes Act

27

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=%22hizb%20ut-tahrir%22%20Decade%3A%222000s%22;rec=11;resCount=Default>

²⁸ McClellan B. “Hizb ut-Tahrir won’t condemn Islamic State death cult”, *Daily Telegraph* (February 19 2015), <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/hizb-uttahrir-wont-condemn-islamic-state-death-cult/news-story/032b37b7c4f33c4b7f4b5428b81b5184>

29

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=%22hizb%20ut-tahrir%22;rec=4;resCount=Default>

In 2005, there was an attempt by then-Labor MP and later Attorney-General Nicola Roxon to introduce an amendment to the *Crimes Act* to deal with violent threats against religious, racial or ethnic groups. The explanatory memorandum to the amendment stated, “This Bill proposes to criminalise activities that would already be criminal when directed to particular individuals. The objective is to criminalise this conduct when it is directed at racially or religiously identified groups”³⁰. The amendment did not succeed, but Roxon correctly identified the need to *criminally* sanction those who make threats to commit violence against racial or religious groups. She told the Parliament at the time, “[The amendment] would give our authorities the power to act against jihadists preaching terrorism but also against neo-Nazi terrorising Jews or others terrorising Muslims or ethnic communities—along with many other examples.”³¹

If successive governments continue to act on the premise that HT Australia does not meet the criteria for proscription as a terrorist organisation, AIJAC would recommend the Government re-consider introducing an amendment to the Crimes Act along the lines of that proposed by Roxon in 2005. This style of amendment allows for freedom of expression, while also protecting Australian communities from the threat of violence by HT Australia by imposing criminal sanctions on those seeking to perpetrate violence.

It is worth noting that in 2020, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies referred a 2017 speech by HT Australia’s Al-Wahwah to NSW Police for investigation under NSW’s racial incitement laws. In the speech, a response to the US decision to move its Israeli embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Al-Wahwah threatened that “The very knife with which you [US president Donald Trump and Israel] cut Palestine is a criminal, infidel, hypocritical knife, and it will be turned against you and will cut your bodies and behead you. This knife will sever your heads from your bodies, just like you severed East Jerusalem from West Jerusalem ... the day will come when you [the Jews] will cry blood.”³²

30

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=CHAMBER;id=chamber%2Fhansardr%2F2005-12-05%2F0037;query=id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansardr%2F2005-12-05%2F0036%22>

31 *Ibid.*

32 Middle East Media Research Institute. “Australian Islamic Activist Ismail Al-Wahwah: The Muslim Rulers Who Recognize Israel Will Be Beheaded By The Same Knife They Used To Partition Palestine (Archival)” (16 Dec 2017), <https://www.memri.org/tv/hizb-tahrir-australia-activist-ismail-wahwah-palestine-liberation-ijihad-knife-behead-muslim-rulers>

FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM

Recommendations:

- AIJAC urges the Government to classify far-right groups, which promote or organise violence, as terror organisations. Failure to do so may enable them to continue to grow and recruit in Australia and could lead to future terror attacks.
- AIJAC recommends the Government consider an amendment to the *Crimes Act* to explicitly prohibit violence, incitement and the glorification of violence against a racial or religious group. This will assist in providing a legal remedy for groups and individuals that seek to harm Australians but fall short of the legislative threshold for proscription.
- AIJAC suggests the Government act on the lessons from New Zealand's Royal Commission into the Christchurch massacre and increase counter-terrorism funding and attention towards addressing far-right extremism. This includes monitoring extremist individuals and groups, and ongoing funding towards the security of vulnerable communities.
- AIJAC urges the Government to demonstrate national leadership in condemning far-right extremism when it appears.
- AIJAC recommends the Government develop a new national anti-extremism strategy to counter extremism in Australian society.

Far-right extremism is a growing threat around the world, including in Australia. While far-right groups were once fringe, today they are able to amplify their messages to a global audience via the internet, including social media, where they have found new ways to recruit, organise and incite violence, representing a potential terrorist threat.

Moreover, far-right extremism is transnational, inspiring a range of small groups that operate around the world. These groups share a culture of fundamental opposition to mainstream society, idealising a revolution in the name of the white or "Aryan" race, share their extremist views online and draw inspiration from each other.

In the US, according to Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Right-wing extremists perpetrated two thirds of the attacks and plots in the United States in 2019 and over 90 percent between January 1 and May 8, 2020."³³ Far-right extremism in the US is expected to increase due to a range of factors. including the outcome of the 2020 US presidential

³³ Johns, Seth G. Doxsee, C. and Harrington, N. "The escalating terrorism problem in the United States", *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (17 June 2020), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/escalating-terrorism-problem-united-states>

election, as a response to the Black Lives Matter movement and due to conspiracy theories associated with the coronavirus pandemic.

Recent far-right terror attacks include:

- The 2019 Christchurch massacre by Australian Brenton Tarrant that killed 51 people in two mosques.
- The 2019 El Paso Walmart attack by Patrick Crusius that killed 23 people.
- The 2019 attack on Halle Synagogue in Germany by Stephan Balliet that killed two people.
- The 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh by Robert Bowers that killed 11 people.
- The 2018 shooting at the Poway synagogue in California by John Timothy Earnest that killed one person and injured three others.
- The 2015 Charleston Church shooting by Dylan Roof that killed nine people in South Carolina.
- The 2011 attack by Anders Breivik in Norway that killed 77 people.

Many modern far-right groups are inspired by these terror attacks and support the “white-replacement” theory, which places the blame on “the Jews” for the claimed demise and destruction of the “European” race, culture and civilisation, including in Australia. Both Tarrant and Crusius promote a radical view of the Great Replacement conspiracy, known as “accelerationism”, which advocates that the demise of Western governments should be accelerated to create radical social change and establish a whites-only ethnostate.³⁴

Coronavirus and the far-right

Many far-right movements have also sought to take advantage of conspiracy theories related to the pandemic, including opposition to 5G technology and mandatory vaccination.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) has reported that, "COVID-19 restrictions are being exploited by extreme right-wing narratives that paint the state as oppressive, and globalisation and democracy as flawed and failing." ASIO added, "We assess the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced an extreme right-wing belief in the inevitability of societal collapse and a 'race war'."

The pandemic has also led to the proliferation of antisemitic conspiracy theories online attempting to connect Jews and Israel to the coronavirus crisis. Some conspiracy theories have accused Jews or “Zionists” of making the pandemic for the purposes of “global domination”, to impose a “New World Order” and for profit. Antisemitic content is also spread online by using the #COVID48 hashtag, which compares Israel to the virus, reflecting

³⁴ *Ibid.*

past depictions of Jews as viruses seeking to take over the world.³⁵ According to Israel's Diaspora Affairs Ministry's annual report, over 2.3 million antisemitic posts were detected online in 2020 from nearly 413,000 users in English, French, Arabic, German, Spanish, and Russian on Twitter, 4Chan, Bitchute, Stormfront, Gab, Minds, and 8Kun.

Far-right extremism in Australia

While far-right extremism has long existed in Australia, in recent years its threat has grown considerably, partly influenced by international far-right groups that spread their views to Australians, online and recruit via social media forums. In September, ASIO stated that up to 40% of its counterterrorism efforts were now directed at far-right extremist activities, an increase from 10-15% before 2016. ASIO also warned that far-right groups were taking advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to recruit and expand their operations. New groups have emerged and existing groups have become more radicalised and increased their memberships. Meanwhile, in October 2020, the Australian Federal Police also reported seeing a rise in young people being aggressively radicalised online amid an increasing threat from right-wing extremism. In Australia, far-right extremism is increasingly growing online, especially among non-mainstream social media forums including Gab, Parler, Telegram and Tiktok.

Recent examples of far-right extremist activity in Australia include:

- In 2020, Phillip Galea, a member of Reclaim Australia and the True Blue Crew, was found guilty of preparing for a terrorist act and making a document likely to facilitate a terrorist act.³⁶
- In 2020, Tyler Jakovac of Albury was charged with urging violence against members or groups and advocating terrorism. Police allege he used the messenger service Telegram to urge the killing of "non-whites, Jews and Muslims". Jakovac allegedly used a far-right group that featured Nazi symbolism to urge violence against other races and religions.³⁷
- In 2017 white supremacist Michael Holt was jailed for stockpiling homemade guns and weapons across Sydney and expressed an intention to commit a mass shooting at a Westfield shopping centre.

³⁵ "Israel predicts rise in antisemitism, as virus related hate is spread online", *Times of Israel* (24 January 2021), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-predicts-rise-in-anti-semitism-as-virus-related-hate-is-spread-online/>

³⁶ Tran, D. "Far-right terrorist Phillip Galea jailed for 12 years after plotting against 'Muslims and lefties' in Melbourne", *ABC News* (20 Nov 2020), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-20/far-right-terror-plotter-phillip-galea-sentenced-in-melbourne/12903588>

³⁷ AAP. "Alleged neo-Nazi teenager charged with terrorism offences in NSW to remain behind bars", *The Guardian* (10 Dec 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/dec/10/alleged-neo-nazi-teenager-charged-with-terrorism-offences-in-nsw-to-remain-behind-bars>

In Australia, there is a range of far-right groups, movements and far-right-motivated individuals that have been active in recent years, many with connections to international groups.

Some groups have formed and morphed into new ones. For example, Reclaim Australia turned into the True Blue Crew and the United Patriots Front. The United Patriots Front became the Lads Society. In 2018, the Lads Society infiltrated the Young Nationals. The Lads Society gave way to the Nationalist Socialist Network led by Thomas Sewell. There was also the now defunct Antipodean Resistance (AR) — a Neo Nazi hate group formed in October 2016, which went by the slogan “We’re the Hitlers you’ve been waiting for” and used the swastika and Nazi salute. AR promoted and incited hatred and distributed racist, homophobic and antisemitic posts and propaganda. In 2018 its website was shut down by its hosting provider.

Given that far-right groups in Australia have formed, disbanded and reappeared as new groups, proscribing such groups alone may not be sufficient. Australian counter-terror authorities should also monitor the individuals involved in far-right extremism ability to due to their ability to form new groups and the danger of lone wolf attacks.

Moreover, while some groups may fall below the threshold of being a terror group, such groups should also be monitored by counter-terror authorities given that the promotion of extremism can inspire violence. AIJAC’s recommendation, that the Government consider an amendment to the *Crimes Act* to explicitly prohibit violence, incitement and the glorification of violence against a racial or religious group, would also be advantageous to law enforcement in these situations.

Today far-right groups and movements in Australia include: The National Socialist Network, the Proud Boys, QAnon, the Base, the Australian Defence League, Right Wing Resistance, the Nationalist Australian Alternative, Soldiers of Odin, the Patriotic Youth League, Blood and Honour, and the Australian Nationalist Movement.

Many of these far-right movements adhere to the same “great replacement theory” that motivated the Christchurch killer. According to this theory, white Europeans are threatened by increasing non-white immigration and are therefore facing “white genocide”. These movements generally hold antisemitic and racist views of society.

Legislative reform

To date, no far-right group has been banned in Australia.

Other Western democratic nations have proscribed far-right groups. In the UK, National Action and other far-right groups are banned and members have been convicted of terror-related and other crimes. While the neo-Nazi group Combat-18 is proscribed in both Germany and Canada, it does not have a similar listing in Australia, despite being linked to a

2010 shooting at a Perth mosque.³⁸ The men involved in that incident did not face terror charges, but were instead prosecuted for causing criminal damage, discharging a firearm across a road and possessing an unlicensed firearm. Moreover, the neo-Nazi group Blood & Honour, which is active in Australia, is banned in several countries including Germany, Russia and Canada.

In February 2021, Canada became the first jurisdiction to list as a terrorist entity the Proud Boys, a white supremacist group that was allegedly heavily involved in the January 2021 storming of the US Capitol. At the same time, Canada's Public Safety Minister also designated The Base and the Atomwaffen Division (AWD). These designations allow Canadian police to freeze these group's assets, and charge anyone who supports these groups. Commentators assessed that the designations would make it much more difficult for those groups to operate in a meaningful way on Canadian soil.

AIJAC calls on the Government to classify far-right groups which promote or organise violence as terror organisations regardless of their geographic location. Failure to do so may enable them to continue to grow and recruit in Australia, and more alarmingly, perpetrate violence on Australians.

The transnational nature of extremist organisations, including functional networking and collaboration online, is a compelling reason for Australia to list as terrorist organisations US-based far-right wing extremist organisations including the Neo Nazi group AWD, which has been linked to murders in the USA, and The Base, a militant white supremacist organisation, which actively promotes an international programme.

Australia should also take lessons from New Zealand following its Royal Commission into the Christchurch massacre in 2019. The inquiry found a series of failures ahead of the terror attack, including a failure to focus on far-right terror threats.

In addition, the Australian Government should demonstrate proactive leadership and develop a new national anti-extremism strategy aimed at aggressively combatting extremist activity and dangerous conspiracy theories, in order to prevent violence and foster a more socially cohesive society.

AIJAC also believes that educating young Australians about the dangers of Nazism and the devastation of the Holocaust has a role to play in countering extremism. Recent surveys show that younger generations are lacking awareness about the Holocaust. While education on the Holocaust is included in the Australian curriculum, currently it is only mandatory in Victoria and New South Wales.³⁹

While Holocaust education on its own is not sufficient to stop antisemitism and racism, it can help counter religious, racial and political sources of hatred. It can also teach lessons that promote an appreciation for democracy and human rights, as students learn how easily

³⁸ "Two WA men arrested over mosque shooting", *Sydney Morning Herald* (25 May 2010), <https://www.smh.com.au/national/two-wa-men-arrested-over-mosque-shooting-20100525-waq1.html>

³⁹ Mittelman, S., History's lessons vital to counter extremism, *Herald Sun* (January 18, 2021).

Germany descended from democracy into dictatorship. This awareness can help prevent young people from being attracted to extremism or becoming bystanders to it.

Far-right threats to Jewish communities

Jewish communities have long been targets and victims of right-wing extremism. The culmination of the dangers of Nazi ideology manifested in the Holocaust with the murder of six million Jews between 1939 to 1945. The ideology of Adolf Hitler as laid out in *Mein Kampf*; ideas of racial supremacy; conspiracies about Jewish power, including the infamous forgery “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”; and promoting Nazi symbols such as the swastika continue to be among modern far-right groups.

In recent years, Jews, particularly in the United States, have been the victims of far-right extremism including the 2018 shootings at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh where a white supremacist killed 11 people, as well the Poway synagogue shooting that killed one person and injured three others.

In 2019 in Germany, a far-right extremist attempted to enter the Halle Synagogue on the Jewish Holiday of Yom Kippur, and when the attacker could not gain access he shot and killed two people nearby. German Federal investigators called the attack far-right and antisemitic terrorism.

The antisemitism of far-right groups was also recently on display during the US Capitol riots in January 2021. For example, a man was wearing a “Camp Auschwitz” T-shirt with a skull and crossbones and under it the phrase “work brings freedom.” Another person had a T-shirt inscribed with “6MWE” which is an acronym common among the far-right standing for “6 Million Wasn't Enough.”⁴⁰

Threats to Jewish communities in Australia

Australian Jewish communities remain concerned by threats from extremists. In Australia, many Jewish schools, synagogues and community centres have security guards and security protocols.

In 2020, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) released a report on antisemitic incidents, stating that between 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, there were 331 antisemitic incidents logged by volunteer CSGs, official Jewish state roof bodies, and the ECAJ. The total figure consists of 188 attacks and 143 threats⁴¹.

Far-right groups and individuals involved in incidents noted in the ECAJ report included: The National Socialist Network, Nationalist Alternative, Thomas Sewell, Blair Cottrell, Charlie Brownau, Dan The Oracle, Danny Fitzgerald, David Hilton, David Hiscox, Jamie Jae, Matty Rose, Raymond Foster (“Nacherel”) founder of The Australian Vanguard (TAV), Ryan

⁴⁰ Sarna, J. “The US Capitol riot was full of hate symbols. Here’s how to spot them”, *ABC News* (12 Jan 2021), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-12/washington-capitol-hate-symbols-race-riots-trump-antisemitism/13048516>

⁴¹ Nathan, J. “Executive Council of Australian Jewry report on antisemitism in Australia 2020” (20 Nov 2020)

Fletcher, and White Dog. For details regarding the specific antisemitic incidents see the ECAJ report.⁴²

The Australian Jewish Community has appreciated and benefited from Commonwealth funding towards Jewish community security costs, especially under the current Safer Community Fund grants. However, given rising antisemitism around the world and in Australia, ongoing government funding towards Jewish community security costs remains necessary.

Far-right movements that appear to be a growing threat include:

The National Socialist Network

The National Socialist Network is a white supremacist neo-Nazi group with members in most major cities in Australia. Its website states it is “loyal to National Socialism and nothing else”, and that it seeks “a revolution”.

The NSN is reported to have more than 2,000 members on Telegram, and uses the “great replacement theory” to recruit. Its leader, Thomas Sewell, began with the Lads Society but viewed it as not radical enough.

The NSN website states: “If White Australia is to survive, then it must organise itself towards this end, and only National Socialism—the highest and most sophisticated creed of the White man—can do this all-important task. National Socialism is the only worldview that puts racial survival first. Its values of health, strength and joyous struggle, stand in absolute contrast to this sickly society’s veneration of degeneracy, weakness and perpetual victimhood.” It also states, “We need to accept the revolutionary nature and methods of National Socialism and drop the right-wing, conservative and reactionary nonsense. A revolution requires revolutionaries. We need men who are willing to do whatever is necessary regardless of the consequences. Revolution is first and foremost a mindset. The movement will depend on those who have the courage of their convictions and will not be intimidated.”⁴³

On January 7, the day after the storming of the US Capitol, reportedly hailed the “brave white men in Washington DC” who, the group wrote, “have lit a flame that will never go out”. It added, “The enemy’s spell has been broken forever ... those Jews and traitor politicians who had crowed so loudly about confronting White supremacy and racism ran and hid in the basement like the rats they are!” The post was accompanied by a photo of a sticker stating “white revolution is the only solution”. The sticker was placed at Commonwealth Place in Canberra, near Australia’s Federal Parliament.⁴⁴

According to the *Guardian*, in videos and posts published following the release of the New

⁴² Nathan (2020).

⁴³ Nationalist Socialist Network, “White Revolution is the Only Solution” (n.d.), <https://national-socialist-network.info/worldview/white-revolution-is-the-only-solution/>

⁴⁴ McGowan (2021).

Zealand royal commission report into the Christchurch massacre, Thomas Sewell praised US shooter Kyle Rittenhouse as a “hero”, and encouraged his followers to “destroy multiculturalism”, “faggotry” and the “Jewish empire of evil”. In a video, Sewell told his followers he believed that “violence solves everything” before adding that he was “talking philosophically”. He reportedly said, “You cannot talk these things out,” adding, “You cannot talk out your racial replacement. Or as [far-right activist Stefan] Molyneux says, there are no more arguments ... There are no arguments with these people. You separate from them, you make, you know, big fences away from them, and if they continue to trespass against you, well you’re left with no other option.”⁴⁵

The NSN is also believed to have taken part in the Grampians cross burning in January 2021. Around 40 men were seen performing Nazi salutes and chanting slogans such as "white power" and "heil Hitler" while camping and hiking in the national park.⁴⁶

QAnon

QAnon began in the US in 2017 but has spread internationally, including to Australia. Jews are increasingly the target of its conspiracy theories. It claims that an anonymous individual with a high-level US security clearance known as “Q” has evidence of a secret war former US President Trump led against a criminal cabal of Democratic politicians and Hollywood elite which they believe are Satan-worshipping paedophiles who operate a global child sex-trafficking ring. QAnon believers often claim that these activities are funded by prominent Jews, including George Soros and the Rothschild family.

According to the World Jewish Congress, “the QAnon core beliefs include antisemitic tropes related to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and blood libel repackaged and rebranded for a modern audience.” An FBI intelligence bulletin from May 2019 described QAnon as a growing domestic terrorism threat in America.

Canadian QAnon researcher Marc-Andre Argentino estimates Australia is in the top-5 countries for QAnon activity⁴⁷. Argentino has also observed a “fair amount of antisemitism” on Australian QAnon notice boards. Argentino’s observation is supported by AIJAC’s research.

During 2020, a significant amount of QAnon-related posts were shared by Australian-based social media accounts across a range of platforms, many of which spread common

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Brook, B. “Nationalist Socialist Network: Melbourne Neo-Nazi group seen in Grampians uncovered”, *news.com.au* (1 Feb 2021), <https://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/national-socialist-network-melbourne-neonazi-group-seen-in-grampians-uncovered/news-story/d6cee39c9d2b0d6e565cf7e339491a5a>

⁴⁷ Wilson, C “QAnon Australia: Explaining the Absurd and Dangerous Conspiracy Theory Down Under” *Gizmodo* <https://www.gizmodo.com.au/2020/08/qanon-australia-explaining-the-absurd-and-dangerous-conspiracy-theory-down-under/> (August 31 2020).

antisemitic tropes, such as Jewish people holding too much power; singling out Jewish figures for attack, such as George Soros or the Rothschild banking family; and invoking blood libel-style criticisms of the coronavirus vaccine.

While there have been no recorded links between Australian QAnon followers and violent attacks on Australian Jews, prominent Jewish figures in the United States have been targeted by supporters of QAnon.

Antisemitic QAnon supporters allegedly made online death threats against Jewish California State Senator Scott Wiener, a Democrat. In August 2020, Wiener told media that at least a quarter of the social media hate mail he received was antisemitic in nature⁴⁸. Wiener attributed much of this hate mail to Republican voters who support QAnon.

The Republican Party under former President Donald Trump welcomed QAnon supporters, to the extent that Marjorie Taylor Greene, known as a QAnon-supporting Republican from Georgia, was elected to the US House of Representatives. Among other extremist social media posts, Taylor Greene accused the Rothschild family – often a trope used as a substitute for Jewish people – of using space technology to start bushfires in California. Trump had called Taylor Greene a future Republican star who is “strong on everything”⁴⁹.

According to Elise Thomas a researcher with ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre, the QAnon conspiracy theory was closely tied to the community of users on 8chan, an online forum where multiple far-right extremists have posted manifestos before launching their attacks (8chan was briefly driven offline in 2019, but has returned under the name 8kun).

Far-right political parties in Australia

There is a role to play for all Australian political parties in combatting extremism. It is incumbent on major political parties to show leadership and condemn extremist statements made in the political arena.

Similarly, it is essential for minor parties, particularly those operating on the fringes, to ensure their political messages do not incite hatred and violence or explicitly lead their supporters to dangerous or violent actors, which has unfortunately occurred in recent years. Recently, far-right Australian politicians have promoted extremist ideas which can lead to the mainstreaming of racism.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Sales, B. “Scott Wiener faces antisemitic and homophobic death threats” Jewish News of Northern California, <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/09/09/scott-wiener-facing-antisemitic-and-homophobic-death-threats/> (9 Sept 2020).

⁴⁹ ABC News “Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene, who endorsed QAnon, wins uncontested seat of Georgia in US election” HYPERLINK "<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-04/us-election-2020-marjorie-taylor-greene-wins-seat-of-georgia/12847590>" <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-04/us-election-2020-marjorie-taylor-greene-wins-seat-of-georgia/12847590> (Nov 4 2020)

⁵⁰ N. Levin, “One Nation Senator fails to moderate antisemitic comments”, AIJAC, <https://aijac.org.au/featured/one-nation-senator-fails-to-moderate-antisemitic-comments/>

It is particularly concerning that the following far-right parties have been able to run in Australian elections given their extremist views:

Australia First Party (AFP)

AFP is a far-right party founded in 1996 by former ALP MP Graeme Campbell and currently led by Jim Saleam. Saleam is a convicted criminal, a former member of the neo-Nazi Nationalist Socialist Party of Australia as a teenager, and founder of the militant Australian white supremacist group National Action. The AFP's policies include abolishing multiculturalism, which it views, echoing the ideology of Christchurch mass-murderer Brenton Tarrant, as a "genocidal white population replacement", and the repeal of the Racial Discrimination Act. It has called for limiting immigration and re-introducing "the White Australia policy of 1901."

The party's website and Facebook page also often refer to "globalists" and "Zionists" – known code words for "Jews". For example, its website has stated: "Beware that there are a number of fake Australian patriot groups out there that secretly have allegiances to other political parties and various globalist and foreign interest groups. Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party is a stooge for the Liberal Party. Other so-called patriots have links and funding from the New World Order, multinationals, foreign nations and Zionists."

Yellow Vest Australia, formerly known as Australian Liberty Alliance

The party was founded by members of the right-wing Q Society in 2015 and was launched by far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders as "Australian Liberty Alliance". It changed its name to "Yellow Vest Australia" in 2019. The party seeks to "stop the Islamisation of Australia and end divisive multiculturalism." It has advocated that full-face coverings be prohibited and preventing "the implementation of any aspect of Sharia finance, Sharia courts and the influence of local or foreign Sharia councils over Australian institutions, our economic system and our supply chain" including "the mandatory labelling of products and services from companies that have taken out halal certification."

THE CHALLENGE OF THE INTERNET

From the 1990s, there has been growing international concern at the role of the internet in providing for the propagation of hateful extremist material and for the facilitation of intimidation, violence and terrorism. From its earliest arrival as a means of mass communication, online technology was seized upon by criminals, extremists and terrorists as an effective, efficient and inexpensive means to further their aims and agendas. AIJAC was involved in the first international conference on hate on the internet, in Toronto, Canada, in 1997, (International Symposium on Hate on the Internet, Toronto, Ontario September 2, September 9, 1997 hosted by B'nai Brith Canada) and co-hosted with the Freilich Foundation, the first conference on this subject in Australia "Cyberhate: Bigotry and Prejudice on the Internet" at the Australian Museum, Sydney, in 2000⁵¹.

As Raphael Cohen-Almagor of the University of Hull, a noted authority on the impact of the internet on society and politics, noted in his 2021 essay "The End of Self-Regulation: On the Role of Internet Intermediaries in Countering Terror"⁵²:

"Criminals, jihadists and terrorists are working in international cells and rings that contest geographical boundaries and require large resources and international security cooperation to obstruct their activities. Internet intermediaries can and should do far more than what they do to proactively fight online terrorism."

Given the demonstrated failure of service providers and global platforms to effectively protect vulnerable third parties, there would appear to be a convincing argument for governments to be involved in this arena. Problems which require inter-government cooperation and government instruction include the use by groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS of information technology to further their political goals and to provide ongoing logistics for their campaigns of violence and to develop strategic intelligence⁵³.

Cohen-Almagor observed;

"Modern terrorism relies heavily on the Internet. Both modern terrorism and the Internet have common features that promote close relations: they are global and diffuse; they do not necessarily require one center; their operations do not require a large budget; innovation is important to their sustainability; and the operations can be enabled by clandestine means. Terrorists and their abettors and collaborators strive to keep their identity, their modes of operation, and their plans secret. They use advanced technological tools to secure their privacy and anonymity and are quick to adapt to new innovations and exploit any and all technological advantages as means to ends. Clandestine modes of operation generate the funds needed to pursue their goals. Terrorists work in international cells and rings that contest geographical boundaries and that require extensive resources and close cooperation

⁵¹ Jones, J. "Offside Online", *Australia/Israel Review* (December 2000).

⁵² Cohen-Almagor, R. "The End of Self-Regulation: On the Role of Internet Intermediaries in Countering Terror" in Goldstone, Jack, A. Alimi, Eitan Y. et al. (Eds.). From Territorial Defeat to Global ISIS: Lessons Learned. *NATO Science for Peace and Security Series - E: Human and Societal Dynamics*, Vol. 151 (2021). PP. 215-238. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348977788_The_End_of_Self-Regulation_On_the_Role_of_Internet_Intermediaries_in_Countering_Terror

⁵³ Bunt, G. Islam in the Digital Age. London, England: Pluto Press, 2013.

among law-enforcement agencies from different countries to obstruct the terrorists' activities."⁵⁴

Individuals seeking solutions to personal crises or complex challenges, or validation, rationalisation or reinforcement for their discontent, or searching for others with similar issues or who offer solutions to their personal dilemmas, can easily become radicalised by extremist ideological communities on the internet. They can then be given guidance as to how to act on their extremist beliefs. So-called "lone wolves" are evidence of the way even single individuals have been able to develop both the mindset and capacity to commit terrorist acts of horrific violence.

Following the exploitation of Facebook by the terrorist who murdered 51 people in mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, Facebook began developing more responsible systems, other digital media providers have followed⁵⁵.

AIJAC does not suggest that Facebook or other digital media companies would consciously wish to promote terror and recognises that in very recent times there have been some reforms which indicate that there is an awareness of the problem. However, the provision of platforms which facilitate the propagation and distribution of material by and for terrorists effectively constitutes material support for terrorism.

AIJAC is aware that this is a complex area of policy and law. The technology concerned evolves rapidly, as we have witnessed in the short 30 years it has been part of our lives.

We have seen the development of Australian case law which has affirmed that international online services are covered by the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (in *Jones v Toben* (2002) FCA 1150). The challenge for legislators is to work with international partners to protect Australians while also having legal tools in place as safeguards in the event that international arrangements are not comprehensive.

The US based ADL (Anti Defamation League (ADL) has argued in its "Protect Plan" of February 2021⁵⁶ that there is a duty of governments "to investigate any complicity between social media companies and extremists, and make social media platforms more transparent and accountable for dangerous disinformation and misinformation, as well as hate content" and to develop means to "independently and transparently verify the amount, nature and impact of extremists online, as well as the effectiveness of current countermeasures."

AIJAC supports this argument.

⁵⁴ Cohen-Almagor (2021)

⁵⁵ Reuters. "Facebook restricts Live feature, White House snubs call for New Zealand shooting response", (15 May 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-extremists-idUSKCN1SL07Q>

⁵⁶ Anti Defamation League. "PROTECT Plan to Fight Domestic Terrorism" (Feb 2021), https://www.adl.org/protectplan?fbclid=IwAR1_ZqlovP3X_54bJrWhn_x-nG2obQekbg71K8yY4MPZqCDKJy6AsORII6c

CONCLUSION

AIJAC believes that there is a requirement for governments to do more than enact laws which provide penalties for those who engage in or facilitate terrorism and provide physical resources to protect communities.

There has been an unwillingness by some sections of politics and the media to accept any degree of responsibility for contributing to the development and spread of extremist ideologies. Dishonesty, lack of transparency and failure to effectively communicate the justification and rationale for policy decisions are all maliciously exploited by anti-democratic forces. Mistrust in established institutions can lead to allegiance to malevolent forces who are able to exploit lack of confidence and trust. It is common for polemicists and propagandists from far-right, far-left, Islamist and other ideologies to talk, with contempt, of the mainstream media while reinforcing their opposition to established institutions with every exposition, or even allegation, of unethical behaviour by those who hold elected office.

Rebuilding trust in established institutions is essential in combatting the growth of extremism.

As outlined in this submission's section on the far-right, there is some overlap between extra-parliamentary extremists and groups which may contest Australian elections. On a number of occasions, there has also been public exposure of extremist individuals or cells operating within the parties which gain substantial support in Australian elections. It is imperative that clearer delineations are drawn, by both statements and actions, which provide evidence that political extremists, of all stripes, are beyond the political pale.

It is intellectually disingenuous to separate acts of extremism from extremist ideology. It is argued by scholars such as Professor Greg Barton⁵⁷ that exposure to hateful messaging is the precursor to acts of terrorist violence. This adds to the compelling moral reasons for hate crimes to be the subject of more recording, analysis and response than is currently the case in Australia.

The Counter Extremism Project, "Violent Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism – Transnational Connectivity, Definitions, Incidents, Structures and Counter Measures"⁵⁸, included a review of the way five Western European countries, and the USA, were addressing both the national and transnational challenges of right-wing extremists. The report noted that programmes designed to combat extremist narratives, directed at children and young adults, public-private partnerships with tech companies to develop counter-messaging, obligations imposed on educational institutions and the health services to have "due regard" to individuals being attracted to terrorism, visible protective measures at sites which are potential terrorist targets (including synagogues), active counter-intelligence operations and tracking far-right extremism as an equivalent danger to foreign

⁵⁷ Barton, G. "To shut down far-right extremism in Australia we must confront the eco-system of hate", *The Conversation* (8 Feb 2021), <https://theconversation.com/to-shut-down-far-right-extremism-in-australia-we-must-confront-the-ecosystem-of-hate-154269>

⁵⁸ Counter Extremism Project. "Violent right-wing extremism and terrorism - transnational connectivity, definitions, incidents, structures, and countermeasures" (Nov 2020), https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/CEP%20Study_Violent%20Right-Wing%20Extremism%20and%20Terrorism_Nov%202020.pdf

terrorist organisations, are all important, complementary means of preventing the “success” of far right extremism.

The domestic measures are important, but only constitute part of what is required. Transnational cooperation is necessary to combat a threat which transcends national boundaries.

The general challenges in achieving successful transnational cooperation are considerable. There is no consensus as to the definition of far-right extremism, or when originally geographic – specific movements become transnational. There is a lack of quality data on a number of the organisations and networks which present a threat. Additionally, organisations designated as terrorists in one country may for a variety of reasons, not be regarded as terrorists in another.

AIJAC recommends the escalation of multilateral dialogue addressing these challenges, in addition to using and developing domestic tools to combat the ability of extremist ideologies to produce terrorist outcomes.

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