



[Australian Jewish Hanukkah Festival Targeted in a Hate Crime](#)

This past Sunday, a despicable hate crime targeting a Hanukkah celebration at Australia's iconic Bondi Beach in Sydney left at least 15 people dead and around 40 others injured. The two perpetrators were a father and son duo who used long-barreled rifles to fire at victims from a footbridge overlooking the crowd of people. Australian authorities have declared the incident as an antisemitic terrorist attack inspired by ISIS. Following the attack, police found several firearms and improvised explosive devices in the assailants' vehicle, which also contained homemade ISIS flags. In the aftermath of the hate crime – which marks the deadliest shooting in Australia in nearly three decades – the government has vowed to drastically tighten gun laws, including potential limits on the number of firearms that an individual can own and the enacting of stricter citizenship requirements for licenses.

Amid the abhorrent attack that unfolded, the brave and selfless actions of one bystander in particular – Ahmed Al-Ahmed – may have saved the lives of countless others. The 43-year-old fruit shop owner, a Syrian-born immigrant to Australia, has been hailed as a national hero after he physically intervened to stop the mass shooting by tackling and disarming one of the gunmen. Al-Ahmed risked his own life to do so and sustained multiple gunshot wounds in the process. Both Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and New South Wales Premier Chris Minns have visited Al-Ahmed while he recovers in the hospital, praising him as a real-life hero who undoubtedly prevented even further loss of life in the attack. A GoFundMe campaign that was set up for Ahmed Al-Ahmed has raised over \$1.5 million USD, with donations pouring in from all over the world.

Observers have noted that the mass shooting in Australia comes during a time that has seen a troubling increase in the frequency of hate crimes taking place around the world. In 2025, global reporting indicates that hate crimes including both antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks are on the rise. Projections suggest that the total number of these are on pace to reach all-time high levels, exceeding previous records last year. This has seen synagogues and mosques face more frequent threats, with advocacy groups citing a deteriorating climate of discrimination that has manifested in unprecedented numbers of complaints. Analysts have also wondered whether Israel's increasingly criticized actions have endangered the security of Jews around the world and contributed to the escalation in hate crimes. Rights groups and activists have of course tried to emphasize the importance of distinguishing legitimate criticism of Israel's

policies from bigoted antisemitism. Regrettably, however, the uptick in incidents denotes that abhorrent individuals have sought to exploit the opportunity to wrongfully conflate these two as a means of carrying out their deplorable hate crimes. Many Jews around the world are themselves increasingly critical of Israel's actions and policies, demonstrating the illogicality and wickedness of targeting Jews in hate crimes since there is no link between them and the behavior of a specific political entity.

The alarming rise in hate crimes across the board should be denounced in the strongest terms, rather than be politicized as some have attempted to do. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu elicited significant backlash for his response to the deadly terrorist attack at Bondi Beach, with critics accusing him of leveraging the tragedy for political aims by trying to link Australian foreign policy decisions to the massacre. Netanyahu explicitly blamed the Australian government for the attack, claiming that the country's recognition of a Palestinian state back in September was somehow a catalyst. This was firmly rejected by Australian officials who rightly expressed that the tragedy should not be shockingly exploited for seeking to score political points. International legal experts and Australian Jewish leaders were also quick to express their disgust at Netanyahu's attempt to link principled human rights and social justice-related support for a Palestinian state to a terrorist hate crime. In fact, various commentators asserted that the Israeli government itself is one of the largest contributors to global insecurity and the worsening climate conducive to hate crimes given that it regularly weaponizes antisemitism in an attempt to silence valid criticism – a tactic that actually endangers Jewish communities by conflating them with Israel's own widely condemned actions and policies.