



The Bondi Attack: ISIS-Inspired Antisemitic Terrorism in Australia

Joshua Roose



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By Joshua Roose

SYNOPSIS

The December 2025 assault on a Jewish community gathering at Bondi Beach outside Sydney, Australia, was the deadliest terrorist attack in recent Australian history. It exposed legislative and security gaps, failures in threat assessment and protective security, and political inaction amid escalating antisemitism. It also serves a warning for Western counterterrorism and social cohesion policies.

COMMENTARY

On the evening of December 14, 2025, at around 6.45 pm, a father and son pair inspired by Islamic State (ISIS) ideology carried out a [coordinated attack](#) on a Jewish community [Hanukkah](#) gathering at Bondi Beach in Sydney. The event, attended by around 1,000 people, was held in open parkland with minimal cover.

The attackers arrived by car, displayed an ISIS flag across the windscreen, and initiated the assault using simple but effective military tactics. After throwing [four improvised explosive devices](#) that failed to detonate, Sajid Akram advanced on the crowd armed with straight-pull shotguns, firing at close range. His son, Naveed Akram, provided cover from higher ground with a .308 straight-pull rifle, enabling sustained fire across the site.

Several bystanders bravely attempted to intervene. Three were killed, and one was seriously wounded. A police officer at the scene returned fire and was seriously wounded. The attack was stopped about six minutes after it began when a plainclothes police officer, acting independently and armed only with a pistol, fatally shot Sajid Akram and wounded Naveed Akram. [Fifteen people were killed](#); fourteen

members of the Jewish community – including a Holocaust survivor, two rabbis and a 10-year-old-girl – along with a non-Jewish photographer.

Failure in Threat Assessment and Intelligence

The Bondi attack exposed the shortcomings of Australia's firearms and protective security frameworks, which remain heavily shaped by a lone-actor threat model dating back to Port Arthur in 1996 where a gunman armed with two semi-automatic rifles killed 35 men, women, and children at a tourist site in the state of Tasmania. This was the deadliest mass shooting in Australian history.

Acting in tandem, the Bondi attackers exploited [legal grey zones](#) by using high powered straight-pull shotguns designed to circumvent bans on pump-action weapons. They achieved sustained close range, improvised micro-combined arms rifle and shotgun fire with these legally obtained weapons to maximise casualties. Irrespective of the failure of the improvised explosive devices, the attack demonstrated how legislative intent can be circumvented through tactical adaptation.

Equally alarming was the ease of preparation. Despite Naveed Akram's [documented associations](#) with extremist Salafi preacher Wissam Haddad and the Street Dawah network, the pair retained lawful access to firearms through Sajid Akram's licensing (from 2023), [travelled to Mindanao](#) in the Philippines in October 2025 in an apparent attempt to establish contact with Islamic State, [rehearsed tactical shooting techniques](#) in rural New South Wales, and conducted [hostile reconnaissance](#) of the Hanukkah celebration site in Bondi Beach days before the attack. When the assault began, the attackers were significantly better armed than local police, who only had pistols.

These failures intersected with shortcomings in threat assessment. The Hanukkah gathering was [publicly advertised](#), and its intersection with Bondi Beach – a renowned landmark – gave the event particular symbolic significance. Although the Hanukkah celebrations were held in an exposed environment, it seems to have been security-assessed using a generic [crowded-places framework](#) rather than one tailored to a markedly heightened threat environment.

This is despite reports that the Jewish Community Security Group (CSG) had identified a [heightened risk](#) during Hanukkah. In the preceding months, pro-Palestinian protests had [targeted Bondi](#) and [surrounding suburbs](#) with significant Jewish populations, sometimes involving aggressive behaviour. Across Australia, antisemitic incidents had [escalated sharply](#), including graffiti, harassment of Jews, and designated [terrorist activity](#) linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, culminating in the [expulsion of the Iranian embassy](#).

Despite this context, access to the Bondi Hanukkah gathering appears to have been unrestricted. Reports indicate that [three police personnel were present](#) at or near the event, but this did not deter the attackers, who engaged police, wounding two.

The attack also raises broader questions about intelligence sharing and coordination. Previous events, including the [Dural caravan incident](#), had already highlighted [gaps](#)

[and tensions](#) in how threat information is synthesised across Australian federal and state agencies. In this case, the failure to assess familial, ideological, and logistical risk factors holistically appears to have obscured the danger posed by lawful firearm access within an extremist-related network.

Political Context and Inaction

Bondi took place against a backdrop of sustained political equivocation amid the rising tide of antisemitism. Following the [protest](#) at the Sydney Opera House on October 9, 2024, where offensive chants targeting Jews were reported, the official response was marked by dispute and delay, resulting in an inquiry that produced [little accountability](#).

Over the past two years, antisemitic rhetoric has increasingly been reframed as legitimate political expression through the language of anti-Zionism. That shift matters. The attackers themselves [used the term “Zionists”](#) in their video recorded before the attack, illustrating how the toleration of specific political language can distort threat assessment and underplay the potential of extremism and violence.

These developments have unfolded within a context of electoral calculation, as the government seeks wider community support in critical constituencies, and demonstrates a more inclusive political posture. Seemingly, this has failed to moderate the extremist sentiment and may have emboldened it.

Where to from Here

After an initial delay and a raft of new laws targeting hate and gun violence, the Australian government has announced a [“Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion”](#) to report in November 2026, alongside a [security review](#) led by former ASIO Director-General Denis Richardson, with a preliminary report due in April 2026. These processes will matter only if they [address the structural failures](#) exposed by Bondi terror rather than focusing narrowly on operational errors.

The central question is whether Australia is willing to recalibrate its threat models, protective security frameworks, and political thresholds for action in an environment of sustained antisemitic and jihadist mobilisation. The Bondi attack must be understood as a critical warning for Western democracies facing similar challenges.

Dr Joshua Roose is an Associate Professor at The Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. He was a Visiting Senior Fellow at RSIS’ International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) from 12-23 January 2026.

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