



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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When press freedom is under threat, why are NZ's media self-censoring the Christchurch massacre?

The Australian Federal Police raids on journalists' homes and media offices have shown the extent to which press freedom has been curbed in Australia to suppress reporting of national security matters. It is therefore shocking that New Zealand's mainstream media have voluntarily agreed to censor their reporting of the royal commission into the Christchurch massacre, and the trial of the accused perpetrator, when there are many serious questions to be answered about the official version of events, and how the inquiry is being conducted.

A totalitarian groupthink political climate has been imposed on our supposedly democratic societies, such that anyone who questions the official establishment version of major events is viciously attacked, or worse—in the May election campaign a Greens candidate was dumped just for questioning details of the 1996 Port Arthur massacre. Of course, there wouldn't be so many questions if the mainstream media pursued the truth without fear or favour, but too often they help cover up the truth and enforce the official line. This has been especially egregious for the nearly two decades since the 9/11 attack, in which the mainstream media have regurgitated the lies of intelligence agencies about war and terrorism, in relation to the Iraq invasion, Anglo-American collusion with Saudi-backed Sunni Wahhabi terrorism, the destruction of Libya, the neo-Nazi coup in Ukraine and downing of MH17, and the failed regime-change war in Syria. By self-censoring, the New Zealand media is doing the same for the Christchurch massacre—helping to create an official version of the event, instead of ensuring a transparent inquiry that addresses the many serious and disturbing questions about this atrocity.

These are some of the questions to which the NZ media should be demanding answers:

- Why is there no public scrutiny of the intelligence agencies? They are being questioned in private under the excuse that current or former officers or agents of NZ's intelligence agencies and partner foreign agencies, *or anyone connected to them*, cannot be identified. Yet it is precisely those foreign intelligence connections that should be opened up to public examination, given the history of British intelligence in particular in collusion with terrorism, including MI5 allowing terrorists based in the UK to plot attacks on other countries. For instance, some of perpetrators of the deadly 7/7 London subway attacks in 2005 had earlier been allowed by MI5 to plot attacks on Pakistan; and the perpetrators of both the 2017 Manchester bombing and London Bridge attack had close links to MI5. MI5 is a key partner of NZ's intelligence agencies, through the Five Eyes (USA, UK, Australia, Canada, NZ) intelligence-sharing alliance.
- Given the Five Eyes electronic spying agencies' ability to collect, store and analyse communications virtually worldwide, how is it possible they missed the accused shooter, whose suspicious movements around Europe, repeated contacts with known white-supremacist groups, and statements of homicidal intent on web forums should have put him at the top of the watch list? Or is it possible that some faction within NZ's intelligence services and/or their sister agencies knew about him all along, but let him operate freely for their own purposes?
- Why are survivors and eyewitnesses to the shootings being blocked from giving testimony to the royal commission? The Muslim community in particular, for whom there were a lot of symbolic shows of support following the massacre, is now largely being ignored, especially those who were at the scene of the crime. And Christchurch woman Jill Keats, who was hailed a hero for rushing into the line of fire to help a wounded man escape, also wants to know why she hasn't been asked to give evidence.
- Is one of the reasons for ignoring survivors because the Imam of the Al Noor mosque, Gamal Fouda, is adamant that the accused shooter didn't act alone? Fouda says he believes the attack was not planned by one person, but a group. Fouda said that in late 2017—around the same time Tarrant moved to NZ and began planning his attack, after extensive contact with European white-supremacist groups—"two Europeans came into the mosque and claimed they were Muslims, but the other people in the mosque were not. They swore at two worshippers and told them to go home", Stuff.co.nz reported 13 May. Fouda said he went to the police, initially concerned that the men were radicalised Western converts, but was ignored. "I replied to the police and said, 'this is very dangerous, not only against Muslims but against New Zealanders, so be careful and check that', and then they said 'no, no, no, this is not serious, we have other things to do'." Three weeks before the attack, another suspicious European visitor came to the mosque pretending to want to learn about Islam, but was obviously not interested. Again Fouda

went to police, this time with pictures of the man from the mosque's security camera, and again, he was ignored; just as the police ignored multiple complaints about Tarrant and his mates from patrons of the gun club where he trained.

For too long Australia's media went along with the government's sweeping police state agenda, sometimes questioning the reach of specific laws, but never questioning the terrorism pretext for those laws. This contributed to a political environment in which politicians feared being accused of being soft on terrorism if they opposed the latest draconian measure. Now that journalists are being raided, the seriousness of the limitations on press freedom is sinking in. By voluntarily self-censoring their reporting on the Christchurch massacre, the NZ media is allowing the state, specifically the intelligence agencies and their Five Eyes partners, to control the information about the event, and use it to suit their agenda. This has already included [New Zealand achieving a global agreement to censor social media](#), which social media platforms had resisted before the massacre. While today NZ's media are voluntarily not reporting on this national security issue, soon they may not be allowed to.