

## **Australia: Fascists driven out of Coburg**

Monday 30 May 2016, by [OAKLEY Corey](#) (Date first published: 28 May 2016).

“Finally, I see so many people standing here together, standing in solidarity. We are uniting against these bigots, these clowns.” These were the words of Rasheed, one of a hundred or so young Muslim locals who joined several hundred socialists, anarchists and other local residents to drive the Nazis out of Coburg on Saturday morning.

Rasheed was speaking after he and other locals had led a triumphant march of 500 people down Sydney Road, the iconic centre of multi-ethnic Coburg.

The Nazis and fascists, who had declared they were coming to the suburb with “force and terror” to shut down an anti-racist rally, had been comprehensively beaten, pushed off the streets.

The fascists had planned to march down Sydney Road. Instead, their rally of 70-80 was cornered blocks away as they were repeatedly taken on by a growing crowd of anti-racists. Only a large and violent police operation to protect the fascists saved them from an even more ignoble fate. As it was, their rally was broken up and they scampered away as hundreds of anti-racists chased them through carparks and sports fields.

Viv Malo, an activist in First Nations Liberation, was among those who helped rout the fascists. “Personally, I will not be idle and let these white colonial remnants spew their vitriol while genocide against my peoples continues”, she said. “Scared idiots is what they are. I’ll shout them down at every opportunity.”

Some argued that we should ignore the fascists, or just rely on the police to protect us. The organisers of the original anti-racist rally, primarily the Socialist Alliance, insisted that they would not confront the fascists, and announced that they had agreed to police requests that they not march on Sydney Road.

If this argument had won the day, it would have been a disaster.

If the vile United Patriots Front bigots had succeeded in their goal of marching down Sydney Road and preventing anti-racists from holding a rally, it would have set a terrible precedent. If the left couldn’t beat back the fascists in Coburg, where else could we expect to stop them?

As it turned out, though, the overwhelming majority who turned up were determined that the fascists would not march. And once groups of people started marching on the fascists’ rally, significant numbers of locals, most of them Muslim, joined in.

Whipping up anti-Muslim racism is the core of the fascists’ organising strategy in Australia and around the world. So having young Muslims on the front lines taking on the fascists who slander and threaten them day in and day out was easily the most important and inspiring aspect of the day.

For the last year, responsibility for taking up the fight against fascists on the streets has fallen mostly to socialist and anarchist groups. The relentless anti-Muslim propaganda in the media, along with intimidation and state terror from the police, has made many Muslims understandably reluctant to take to the streets in anti-racist mobilisations.

Jamiel Sabah, a Palestinian, explained the significance of what happened this weekend:

*"I know too well of the fear and deeply rooted pain caused by the Australian establishment's Islamophobia and anti-terror laws that suffocate our Arab and Muslim community. A decade ago, my old Palestinian footy coach and a Muslim man on a street I grew up on were amongst a few locals who were imprisoned for years under anti-terror laws for content-less 'thought-crimes'.*

"My family, like many Arab and Muslim families, fear for their relatives who speak out against racism. The rants about 'extremism' in our papers and by our politicians remind us every day to keep our heads down or else you may be the next scapegoat.

"Today, in Coburg, the establishment and a group of fascists once again tried to use fear to shut down our right to protest against racism. All week cops in Coburg have been telling locals to keep away. But today, in Coburg, we refused to be intimidated by fear mongering, we stood together to defend our civil rights and tell Australia we are proud to stand against fascism, institutionalised racism and intimidation, attacks on refugees and wars that slaughter our brothers and sisters in the Middle East."

Of course, one protest in one suburb will not overcome decades of fear and intimidation. But it was a good start.

The media will, as always, slander those who are prepared to stop fascists marching in the streets. The Sunday Herald Sun ran a front cover and four-page spread denouncing "street warfare" and condemning the left and right equally.

It is a funny thing. When the left marched against US wars in Iraq, we were accused of "appeasing" what we were told was the 21<sup>st</sup> century's version of Hitler, Saddam Hussein. When we protested against draconian "war on terror" laws or defended the Palestinians, we were told we were appeasing the new "Islamofascism".

But when we stand up against actual fascists - bona fide admirers of Adolf Hitler - and say they should not be able to spread hatred, fear and violence on our streets, we are condemned to high heaven. Actual fascists, it seems, are the only people the right wing media think the left should appease.

Well, we are not going to appease them. We are going to stop them. And we won't be apologising for that for one second.

COREY OAKLEY

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**P.S.**

\* REDFLAG. 28 MAY 2016:

<https://redflag.org.au/node/5306>