



By: TA | AP Insight

Australia accuses Iran of organizing antisemitic attacks and expels ambassador



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has accused Iran of organizing two antisemitic attacks in Australia and said the country was cutting off diplomatic relations with Tehran in response on Tuesday.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization, or ASIO, concluded that Iran had directed arson attacks on the Lewis Continental Kitchen, a kosher food company in Sydney, in October 2024 and on Melbourne's Adass Israel **Synagogue** two months later, Albanese said.

Shortly before the announcement, the Australian government told Iran's Ambassador to Australia Ahmad Sadeghi that he will be expelled.

It also withdrew Australian diplomats posted in Iran to a third country, Albanese said.

An alert to Australians in Iran noted the embassy's closure and urged them to "strongly consider leaving as soon as possible, if it is safe to do so."

"Foreigners in Iran, including Australians and dual Australian-Iranian nationals, are at a high risk of arbitrary detention or arrest," the warning read.

Australia updated its warning to travelers to its highest level: "Do not travel" to Iran.

Iran's government denied the allegations, while its foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, called Albanese a "weak politician."

"Iran is paying the price for the Australian people's support for Palestine," Araghchi wrote on the social platform X. "Canberra should know better than to attempt to appease a regime led by war criminals."

Last week Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also **branded** Albanese a "weak politician who had betrayed Israel" after an Aug. 11 announcement by Albanese that his government's **recognition** of a Palestinian state will be formalized at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

'Dangerous acts of aggression'

Police have already **arrested** at least one suspect in the Sydney cafe fire investigation and two suspects directly accused of torching the Melbourne synagogue.

Sayed Mohammed Moosawi, a 32-year-old Sydney-based former chapter president of the Nomads biker gang, has been charged with directing the fire bombings of the Sydney café as well as the nearby Curly Lewis Brewery.

The brewery was apparently confused for the café and mistakenly targeted three days earlier for an antisemitic attack.

The Iranian government directed at least two of these attacks - Anthony Albanese

Giovanni Laulu, a 21-year-old man from Melbourne, was charged last month with being one of three masked arsonists who caused extensive damage to the synagogue in December.

A second alleged arsonist, a 20-year-old man also from Melbourne, is expected to appear in court Wednesday, a police statement said. He has not been publicly named.

"ASIO has now gathered enough credible intelligence to reach a deeply disturbing conclusion," Albanese told reporters. "The Iranian government directed at least two of these attacks. Iran has sought to disguise its involvement but ASIO assesses it was behind the attacks."

"These were extraordinary and dangerous acts of aggression orchestrated by a foreign nation on Australian soil," he said. "They were attempts to undermine social cohesion and sow discord in our community. It is totally unacceptable."

Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong said that Canberra would keep some diplomatic lines open to Tehran to advance Australia's interests. She added that it was the first time

Australia has expelled an ambassador since World War II.

Terrorist organization

Albanese said that Australia will **legislate** to list Iran's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization.

Australia's law makes providing support to a listed terrorist organization a crime.

The government has previously rejected calls to list the Revolutionary Guard under existing terrorism laws because it is a government entity.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has been accused of carrying out attacks abroad in the past, though it broadly denies any involvement. The Guard's Quds, or Jerusalem, Force is its expeditionary arm and is accused by Western nations of using local militants and criminals in the past to target dissidents and Israelis abroad.

These were attacks that deliberately targeted Jewish Australians - Executive Council of Australian Jewry

A spokesperson for the Executive Council of Australian Jewry welcomed the terrorist designation for the Revolutionary Guard, adding in a statement that the group was "outraged" that a foreign actor was behind the crimes.

"Foremost, these were attacks that deliberately targeted Jewish Australians, destroyed a sacred house of worship, caused millions of dollars of damage, and terrified our community," the statement said.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, Israel has arrested several people on charges they had been paid or encouraged by Iran to carry out vandalism and monitor potential targets there.

'A matter of community cohesion'

Iran denied Australia's allegations through its Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei, who tried to link it to the challenges Australia faced with Israel after announcing it would recognize a Palestinian state.

"It looks like that the action, which is against Iran, diplomacy and the relations between the two nations, is a compensation for the criticism that the Australians had against the Zionist regime," Baghaei claimed.



I don't think that's a matter of Australia-Israel relations, but a matter of community cohesion here in Australia - Michael Shoebridge

Albanese previously resisted calls to expel Iran's envoy to Canberra before, analysts said, including in 2024 when Sadeghi was summoned for meetings with foreign ministry officials over his social media posts.

Michael Shoebridge, a former Australian defense and security official and director of the think tank Strategic Analysis Australia, said he didn't believe the move was prompted by Israel's complaints.

"I don't think that's a matter of Australia-Israel relations, but a matter of community cohesion here in Australia," he said.

Suspected foreign actors

There has been a steep rise in antisemitic

incidents in Sydney and Melbourne since the Israel-Hamas war began in 2023.

Australian authorities have previously said they suspect that foreign actors are paying local criminals-for-hire to carry out attacks in the country.

Neither ASIO director-general Mike Burgess nor Albanese explained what evidence there was of Iranian involvement.

Burgess said no Iranian diplomats in Australia were involved.

“This was directed by the IRGC through a series of overseas cut-out facilitators to coordinators that found their way to tasking Australians,” Burgess said.

While antisemitic incidents increased in Australia after the Israel-Hamas war began on Oct. 7 2023, Iran was responsible for a transition in October last year when the violence more directly targeted people, businesses and places of worship, Burgess said.

“Iran started the first of those,” Burgess said.