



By: TA | AP Brief

# Australia announces a royal commission into antisemitism after Bondi mass shooting



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a wide-ranging royal commission into antisemitism, weeks after two gunmen **opened fire** on a Jewish holiday event at **Bondi Beach**, killing 15 people.

The commission will investigate the nature, prevalence and drivers of antisemitism generally as well as the circumstances of the Bondi mass shooting, Albanese told reporters in Canberra.

It will also make recommendations for law enforcement, strengthening social cohesion and countering the spread of extremism.

A royal commission, which is the most powerful form of government-commissioned inquiry that can be held in Australia, has the power to summon witnesses and request documents as evidence. It will be led by former High Court judge Virginia Bell, Albanese said.

A report is due by Dec. 14, which will be a year to the day since the shooting during a Hanukkah celebration at the Sydney landmark.

"This was an antisemitic terrorist attack, aimed at Jewish Australians, inspired by ISIS, the deadliest that has ever occurred on Australian soil," said Albanese, referring to the Islamic State group.

The surviving suspect, Naveed Akram, 24, faces dozens of **criminal charges** including murder and terrorism.

He has yet to enter a plea. His father, Sajid Akram, was shot dead by police during the episode.

## A legislative agenda

The announcement followed weeks of urging, that has grown in volume, from lawmakers across the political spectrum, some Jewish leaders and other public figures such as prominent sportspeople for a national royal commission to be convened, instead of a statewide inquiry in New South Wales, where the shooting happened.

Albanese at first suggested such a wide-ranging inquiry might take too long, but rejected the suggestion on Thursday that he had been pressured to change his mind.

"I have listened," he said. "In a democracy that's a good thing."

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Albanese had already launched an investigation into Australia's security and law enforcement agencies following the shooting, which he said would become part of the royal commission.

He also plans to enact a legislative agenda in response to the attack that includes tightening Australia's already stringent gun laws and criminalizing the words of so-called hate preachers, which his government has said frequently fall below the bar for prosecution.