

Muslim groups claim 'double standard' in police handling of Sydney stabbings; call for changes to way terror offences are worded as more teenagers charged.

Always the victims. From [CBS Australia](#), [ABC News Australia](#) and the [Irish News](#)

Muslim community leaders have spoken out about the case of a 14-year-old who's among five teenage boys denied bail on terrorism offences. He was arrested with four other teens charged in connection to the stabbing of an Orthodox [Christian bishop at a south-western Sydney church](#).

[Two teenage boys charged with terrorism](#) offences as part of an investigation into a stabbing at a church in Sydney had videos of beheadings produced by the Islamic State on their mobile phones, police will allege. The 14-year-old and 17-year-old faced court charged with possessing or controlling extremist material following a series of counterterrorism raids across New South Wales.

The younger boy was granted conditional bail, but he will remain in custody after the court heard the prosecutor intends to lodge an appeal. The proposed bail conditions restrict use of phones, computers and gaming consoles to communicate, and stipulate that the boy see a psychologist. The court heard police will allege the files on the 14-year-old's phone include videos that show people being run over and a "cartoon advocating violence towards homosexual men."

The 17-year-old being held on the same charge was denied bail.

In denying bail, Magistrate Mulroney described the images that are the subject of the charges as “awful, awful, awful...It depicts extreme violence, gratuitous violence, it also depicts the methodologies of the commission of violence acts,” he said.

In total, five teenagers are facing charges following the raids in Sydney and Goulburn. . . On Wednesday, 13 search warrants were executed in a number of suburbs across Sydney as well as a premises in Goulburn.

Secretary of the Lebanese Muslim Association Gamel Kheir has called the police actions “heavy handed” and criticised the language used by authorities, particularly the claim that the teenagers are religiously motivated.

We went from a scenario one week ago where we were clearly told there was a lone wolf... now what has changed in a week that we are now portraying it as a terrorist cell,” he said. “If that has eventuated, why aren’t we kept abreast of these things, if the police want us to support and help them, then we as a community need to know. Community leaders could have played a role in de-escalation”

AFP Deputy Commissioner Krissy Barrett said following the raids that investigations revealed a “network” of people who share a “similar violent extremist ideology”. NSW Police has said it is continuing to “investigate the associates of the alleged offender who conducted the stabbing at a Wakeley church”.

In a statement, the Australian National Imams Council, the Alliance of Australian Muslims and the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network said it was necessary to “avoid simplistic attributions that target specific communities”.



A collective statement from three peak Muslim groups in Australia has released a statement in response to Wednesday's counterterrorism raids, calling for a revision of Australia's terrorism laws. (ABC News: Sean Tarek Goodwin)

The group's spokeswoman Ramia Abdo Sultan said terrorism was driven by political ideology and not religion. The presumption that terrorism is inherently tied to religion is not only inaccurate but harmful," Ms Abdo Sultan told a press conference. *"Taqiyya, I just met a bint called Taqiyya..." as isn't quite sung in West Side Story.*

The alliance of Islamic groups did not take questions during the four minute press conference, telling the assembled media that they could submit questions by email.

The Alliance further said it had created a perception of a double standard and further alienated the country's minority Muslim community. (The) attack at a Bondi Junction shopping centre was "quickly deemed a mental health issue" while the stabbing of a Christian bishop at a Sydney church two days later was "classified as a terrorist act almost immediately".

"The differing treatments of two recent violent incidents are stark," Ramia Abdo Sultan, said "Such disparities in response

create a perception of a double standard in law enforcement and judicial processes,”

Ms Abdo Sultan also singled out ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess and said the use of racial and religious profiling and the failure of law enforcement agencies to consult with the Muslim community further undermined social cohesion.

“The use of charged language such as “religiously motivated Sunni violent extremism” by the Director-General of ASIO Mike Burgess, particularly during sensitive times ... fuels Islamophobia and further marginalises the Muslim community,” she said.

Mr Burgess said “Sunni violent extremism poses the greatest religiously motivated violent extremist threat in Australia”, in the ASIO Annual Threat Assessment on February 28.

A spokesperson for ASIO said the overarching descriptors of “ideologically motivated violent extremism” and “religiously motivated violent extremism” allowed accurate categorisation of security threats on the basis of their primary driver.

NSW Police has said there is no specific threat to public safety and no threat to Anzac day commemorations.