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Minns Risks Backlash Over Bridge Protest Ban Threat

August 4, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



New South Wales (NSW) Premier Chris Minns faces internal and public criticism for opposing a pro-Palestinian march on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, with risks of escalating tensions if future protests are banned.

The August 3, 2025, pro-Palestinian march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, attended by an estimated 90,000 to 300,000 people, has put NSW Premier Chris Minns in a precarious position. After the NSW Supreme Court overturned a police decision to block the march, Minns maintained his opposition, warning that the bridge is not “open season” for protests, per ABC News. This stance has sparked backlash within his own Australian Labor Party, with Members of Parliament (MPs) like Stephen Lawrence and Anthony D’Adam accusing him of prioritizing traffic flow over humanitarian concerns in Gaza.

Lawrence warned that banning such protests could lead to violence, citing the risk of suppressing peaceful assembly in a democratic society, according to The Guardian.

Minns' push to limit future bridge protests stems from concerns over public safety and costs, with policing of pro-Palestinian rallies in 2024 costing taxpayers \$5 million, as he told 2GB radio. He suggested reviewing the court's ruling to prevent a precedent, but Greens Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) Sue Higginson argued he lacks legal authority to block protests outright, per Archyde. The Palestine Action Group's Josh Lees, a key organizer, noted that attempts to ban protests often amplify turnout, as seen with the massive crowd, per The Age. Acting Deputy Commissioner Peter McKenna emphasized public safety as the police's primary concern, denying political influence, per Brisbane Times.

Opposition figures like Liberal MP Mark Speakman argued the bridge, a critical infrastructure, should not be used for protests, suggesting alternative venues, per ABC News. Jewish community leaders, including Michele Goldman of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, backed Minns' initial opposition, citing risks to community cohesion, per The Australian Jewish News. However, Unions NSW Secretary Mark Morey called Minns' stance an overreach, urging facilitation of peaceful protests, per City Hub. With internal dissent from MPs like Penny Sharpe and Jihad Dib, who joined the march, Minns risks alienating his party and the public if he pursues restrictive legislation, potentially fueling unrest.