

ISIS tries to leverage knife attack



Flowers outside Pellegrini's in Melbourne. Picture: Nicki Connolly.

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Islamic State-aligned groups have released fresh propaganda based on Friday's terror attack in Bourke Street, as new data showed a high incidence of violent radicalism among Australians denied their passports by security agencies.

Islamic State-linked Sunni Shield Media Foundation this week released posters with images of the Bourke Street attack, including one showing attacker Hassan Khalif Shire Ali attempting to stab a police officer.

Another poster contained a photo of the utility that Shire Ali set alight during his fatal jihadi mission. "Australia, don't think you are away from our attacks," text on the poster read.

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton yesterday condemned the propaganda. "This demonstration shows their evil minds at work," he said. "We will continue our efforts to counter propaganda and gather intelligence to defeat the scourge."

Bill Shorten condemned the propaganda. "I urge internet providers and social media companies to remove any objectionable material which encourages

terrorism,” the Opposition Leader said. “We all have an obligation to ensure it is not disseminated further and doesn’t reach vulnerable young people.”

An analysis by The Australian found at least 10 of the 240 people who were refused passports or had them cancelled have launched attacks or have been convicted of planning acts of terrorism since 2014.

Among them are Numan Haider, who was refused a passport and attacked police with a knife before being shot outside a Melbourne police station in September 2014, and Hassan Khalid Shire Ali, who had his cancelled in 2015.

After last week’s attack, Islamic State said via its propaganda arm that Shire Ali was an “Islamic State fighter and carried out the operation”, but provided no evidence to back its claim.

Lowy Institute terrorism expert Lydia Khalil said the terrorist group was quick to claim an attack regardless of whether the attacker had links to the group. “IS is very good on capitalising on the news cycle,” she said.