

# Oppose Canada's ban on British anti-war MP Galloway!

Keith Jones  
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Workers and all those who defend fundamental civil liberties should unequivocally oppose the Canadian government's attempt to prevent British anti-war MP George Galloway from addressing public meetings in four Canadian cities next week.

Canada's Conservative government has labeled Galloway a "national security" threat and ordered he be permanently barred from Canada because there are "reasonable grounds" to believe he is a member of a terrorist organization and/or a supporter of terrorism.

This is a preposterous claim: a transparent, politically-motivated attempt to smear Galloway and to rob Canadians of their democratic and constitutionally-protected right to hear his views.

Galloway has been targeted by Canada's right-wing government because of his outspoken criticism of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—he was expelled from the British Labour Party in 2003 because he opposed Britain's participation in the illegal invasion of Iraq—and because of his opposition to Israel's subjugation of the Palestinian people.

Canadian Immigration Minister Jason Kenney has cited Galloway's opposition to the Afghan war as evidence of his purported support for terrorism. The letter from Canada's High Commission informing Galloway that he is being excluded from Canada claims that there are grounds to believe the five-term British MP is a member, or at least an aider and abettor, of the "terrorist organization" Hamas. As proof, it pointed to the Viva Palestine aid convoy Galloway led earlier this month. The convoy brought humanitarian assistance to the beleaguered people of the Gaza Strip, who continue to be subjected to a punishing economic blockade by the Israeli Defence Forces.

As Galloway's Canadian lawyers have argued, to claim that Galloway is a terrorist accomplice based on

the fact that a small portion of the convoy's aid was given to the head of Gaza's democratically-elected Hamas government is an inference so outlandish and perverse that it clearly constitutes a governmental "abuse of power."

It also constitutes a chilling attack on democratic rights: because it has been concocted with the aim of derailing Galloway's "Resisting war from Gaza to Kandahar" Canadian tour and preventing Canadians from hearing his criticisms of US, Canadian and Israeli government policy.

But no less important, the Conservative government in claiming there are "reasonable grounds" to consider Galloway a terrorist, is radically broadening the legal definition of terrorism and support for terrorism, effectively making it a crime to express solidarity with and provide humanitarian aid to an oppressed people targeted by imperialism.

In this regard, it must be noted that the sweeping language of the "national security" section of Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* is very similar to that used in Canada's post-2001 anti-terrorist legislation.

Sections of the Canadian right are already pressing the government to make it a crime under Canada's anti-terrorism laws to espouse opposition to the state of Israel or to express a wide range of socialist, progressive and bourgeois nationalist views.

In a statement applauding Galloway's exclusion from Canada, B'nai Brith Canada Executive Vice-President Frank Dimant declared, "[T]hose who support the pro-terrorist agenda of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, whose avowed aim is the destruction of the Jewish state, should not be given public platforms to spew their vile messaging."

Terming it the "logical extension" of the banning of

Galloway, Dimant urged the Canadian government to review the Anti-Terrorism Act so as to "close all legal loopholes that would allow the open glorification of terrorism."

Led by the neo-conservative ideologue Stephen Harper, Canada's three-year-old Conservative government has moved Canada's politics sharply to the right. It has dramatically cut corporate taxes; championed, expanded, and extended Canada's leading role in the Afghan war; vociferously supported the Israeli invasions of Lebanon and Gaza and justified the war crimes of the Israeli military with the blanket claim that Hamas and Hezbollah "terrorists" are morally responsible for any and all Palestinian and Lebanese civilian casualties.

The exclusion of Galloway exemplifies the type of forces that have the Harper government's ear. The Canadian chapter of the fascistic Jewish Defence League (JDL) has boasted that it initiated the campaign to prevent Galloway from speaking in Canada. A spokesman for Kenney has conceded that the Immigration minister first learned of Galloway's impending tour from a JDL Canada letter.

JDL activists in the US have carried out terrorist attacks. Indeed, the politics of the JDL's US founder, Meir Kahane, were so extreme and violently anti-Arab that he was banned from running for office in Israel and his Kach Party is proscribed as a terrorist organization by the Zionist state.

While the Zionist right and extreme-right undoubtedly played an important role in the Canadian government's exclusion of Galloway, this action arises from and manifests broader socio-political processes.

In Canada, as around the world, the capitalist ruling elite has been on an increasingly right-wing trajectory for the past three decades. As society becomes ever more socially polarized, as the ruling elite systematically drives down the social position of the working class and employs war as a means of asserting its interests on the world stage, it becomes ever more indifferent and hostile to democratic rights.

During the 1980s and 1990s, federal and provincial governments used a battery of laws to illegalize militant working class struggles. Under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, the so-called war on terror has been used to justify a huge increase in the repressive apparatus of the state and to pass laws that

overthrow fundamental democratic juridical principles, such as the right to a public trial and the right of the accused to know the evidence against him. The Canadian state has repeatedly been complicit in US and Afghan torture. It even developed its own form of rendition, in which Canadian citizens traveling in the Middle East were detained without trial and tortured by various governments with the support of Canada's national security establishment.

Last December, the ruling class overwhelmingly rallied round the Conservatives when, in flagrant violation of Canada's democratic traditions, they shut down parliament for seven weeks through the office of the unelected Governor-General, to prevent the opposition parties from exercising their right to defeat the government.

The opposition parties, including the social-democratic NDP, all quickly and quietly accepted this constitutional coup.

In Canada, as around the world, the struggle to defend the most basic democratic rights requires the independent political mobilization of the working class and is inseparable from a struggle against the bourgeoisie's program of war and social reaction.

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