

Fresh state provocation

Police raid Quebec Solidaire leader's home

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Police raided the home of Quebec Solidaire leader Amir Khadir early yesterday morning and arrested his daughter and her boyfriend, both of them activists in the Quebec student strike.

While the charges against the 19-year-old Yalda Machouf-Khadir will be known only when she is officially arraigned today, she is reportedly to be charged with mischief for allegedly defacing the office of then-Education Minister Line Beauchamp on April 13.

The raid on the Khadir home was part of a large police operation, involving raids on eight dwellings in Montreal and suburban Longueuil. The raids targeted eleven supporters of the 17-week-long student strike whom police allege have been involved in acts of vandalism and mischief. According to police, the charges that will be laid against them range from mischief and breaking and entering, to conspiracy and committing a terrorist hoax. The latter is a very serious crime that was introduced under Canada's draconian 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act. It carries a maximum five-year prison sentence.

The manner in which the raids were carried out, their timing, and the gravity of the charges that the state is preparing to lay indicate they were a calculated provocation aimed at furthering the provincial Liberal government's longstanding campaign to depict the striking students as violent and thereby justify the state suppression of their militant strike against an 82 percent university tuition fee hike.

Under Bill 78, an emergency law adopted last month, the Liberal government effectively criminalized the student strike and placed sweeping new restrictions on the right to demonstrate over any issue in Quebec.

There is no question that the raids were also meant to intimidate and discredit Khadir. An Iranian-born doctor, Khadir is one of the two co-leaders of Quebec Solidaire, which promotes itself as a "left" pro-Quebec independence party, and is its sole member in the provincial legislature.

Khadir has been closely identified with the student strike and has repeatedly condemned police violence. Last Tuesday evening he was arrested and handcuffed along with 64 other people when Quebec City Police declared a demonstration protesting Bill 78 illegal and arrested its participants en masse.

That the decision to raid Khadir's home was politically motivated is underscored by the fact that the police tipped off the media in advance. Reporters for *La presse* and Radio-Canada were on hand to witness and video-tape the police's arrival and subsequent arrest of Khadir's daughter, who was taken away handcuffed.

Khadir's daughter, CEGEP (junior college) Vieux-Montréal student Yalda Machouf-Khadir, has also been prominently identified with the student strike and has twice been ticketed for participating in demonstrations.

Police spent some four hours searching the Khadir family home and took away political materials, although their warrant said they were looking for several articles of clothing and a black flag. According to Khadir's wife, Nima Machouf, "They came to pick up my daughter and her boyfriend and they had a warrant to get evidence—in particular clothes and shoes. After a four-hour search of the house, they left with papers, leaflets and a garbage bag (containing) their morning coffees."

Machouf told reporters she is worried—as any parent would be when her child is arrested. "There are a lot of students who are in the sights of the government and will be arrested — or have been," said Machouf. "I sympathize with them. We're all experiencing the same worry."

In a statement to the press, Amir Khadir urged people not to be intimidated by the police's actions. "People are fed up with the Liberal government," declared the Quebec Solidaire leader. "Hundreds of thousands of people have been demonstrating in a peaceful way for months to express their rejection of this government's policies and of Bill 78. Our people will not let themselves be distracted, even less discouraged, by police repression or

political intimidation.”

During the subsequent question and answer session, Khadir drew attention to the government and media campaign aimed at slandering the student movement as violent. Premier Jean Charest “associates the red square [the symbol of the striking students] with violence and chaos,” said Khadir. “He tries to scare the public and intimidate opposition MNAs.”

The student associations have denounced the raids, noting that they came on the eve of Montreal’s Formula One Grand Prix, around which the government has mounted a huge propaganda offensive with the aim of bullying students into silence or, failing that, justifying increased police violence.

“One can ask questions about the timing of the raids right before the Grand Prix,” said Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, the spokesman for CLASSE (The Broader Coalition of the Association for Student-Union Solidarity).

The newly-elected president of FECQ (the Quebec Federation of College Students), Éliane Laberge, also condemned yesterday’s police action. “It’s clear we do not want a Quebec where MNAs [Members of the National Assembly] get arrested, where young people are sought out in their own homes, where students spend entire days in jail.”

The student associations repeated their call for the government to resume the negotiations that it short-circuited last week.

Despite our profound political differences with the nationalist and pro-capitalist politics of Quebec Solidaire, the *World Socialist Web Site* calls on workers and youth to vigorously oppose the Charest government’s intimidation and harassment of Amir Khadir, as part of the fight for the independent political mobilization of the working class against Bill 78 and the entire austerity program of the ruling class.



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