

Canada's New Democratic Party supports Israeli war crimes

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As the death toll in Gaza continues to mount, Canada's social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) has come under increasing criticism for its failure to denounce the murderous assault being carried out by the Israeli government.

As of Friday, more than 840 Palestinians had been killed—three-quarters of them civilians. Six thousand more have been wounded. Fresh water is unavailable to up to 80 percent of Gaza's population. Food and medicines are in short supply. Half of the sewage in the enclave either runs into the streets or directly into the Mediterranean Sea. Hospitals, a facility for the disabled, and ambulances have all been shelled. At least four U.N. compounds where civilians have sought refuge have been attacked. On Thursday a U.N. school sheltering hundreds was hit by tank fire, killing at least fifteen and wounding dozens more.

Over the past two weeks, Thomas Mulcair, the head of the NDP and the leader of the Official Opposition in parliament, and Paul Dewar, the NDP foreign affairs critic, have refused to oppose Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's full-throated support for the Israeli onslaught.

Harper has echoed the lies and propaganda of the Israeli government, laying blame for the deaths of Palestinian civilians on the "terrorists" of Hamas—Gaza's elected government. "It is evident," declared Canada's Prime Minister on July 13, "Hamas is deliberately using human shields to further terror in the region." Callously indifferent to the thousands of civilian victims of Israel's highly advanced, US-funded and armed military machine, Harper proclaimed, "Solidarity with Israel is the best way of stopping the conflict."

And once Israel launched its ground invasion of Gaza, Harper issued a further statement affirming Canada's "steadfast" support "of Israel's right to defend itself as long as the terrorist attacks by Hamas continue."

Canada's unconditional support for Israel was quickly endorsed by the Liberals, Canadian big business' other traditional party of government. Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau has endorsed Israel's murderous violence as

justifiable self-defense, while condemning Hamas as a terrorist organization that "must cease its rocket attacks immediately."

A similar tone has been adopted by the NDP. "We have reiterated that Hamas' continued rocket attacks are unacceptable," wrote Dewar. In his statement the NDP foreign affairs critic carefully avoided any specific condemnation of Israel's targeting and killing of civilians, including women and children, and covered up the fact that the assault on Gaza is transparently a long-planned act of Israeli aggression, with last month's murder of three Israeli youth—an act Hamas has always insisted it had nothing to do with—serving as no more than a convenient pretext.

Earlier this week, NDP leader Mulcair weighed into the discussion in a similar vein. He refused to oppose the Israeli assault, even if, to use his words, it has "already caused too many civilian casualties, but denounced "the firing of rockets by Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants at civilian populations" as "utterly unacceptable". Mulcair's stance earned him praise from the neo-conservative, rabidly pro-Zionist *National Post*. "The current round of hostilities in Gaza suggest a New Democratic Party that has matured," declared *Post* columnist John Ivison.

Whilst outrage against the war crimes of the Israeli state finds no place in the utterances of the NDP or any other mainstream political party, thousands of Canadians have rallied in cities across the country to denounce the Israeli government's bloody policy of collective punishment against the citizens of Gaza.

In an "Open Letter to the NDP," the politically non-partisan human rights organization, *Independent Jewish Voices* wrote, "It appears that while the NDP considers Hamas' ineffective rockets to be 'unacceptable,' Israel's world-class rockets cannot even be mentioned, nor can the national identity of the civilians who have been killed. The (NDP) statement also calls for 'restraint' from both sides, without explaining how the babies Israel is killing in their sleep should show restraint. How should hospitals, schools, ambulances and unarmed families that Israel is bombing

indiscriminately show restraint? It is time for real restraint in using this kind of misleading false equivalence that is totally disconnected from the reality of Israel's massacres against the people of Gaza."

At the same time as the NDP is providing political cover for the governments of Netanyahu in Jerusalem and Harper in Ottawa, it has come to light that the party recently banned prospective NDP candidate Paul Manly from seeking the NDP nomination in his Vancouver Island constituency. Manly charges he is being blocked by the party leadership because of the outspoken calls he made for the release of his father—a former NDP MP and United Church minister—from Israeli custody after the latter, along with a host of other international volunteers, was seized in 2011 from a ship in international waters off Gaza. The ship was attempting to bring supplies to Gaza through an Israeli maritime blockade, part of a now seven year-long air, road and sea blockade imposed by Israel and supported by Egypt's military dictatorship that denies the Palestinians of Gaza access to a vast array of basic goods.

Many NDP supporters in Manly's constituency have voiced their opposition to his treatment with some threatening to jump to the Green Party of Elizabeth May. May, however, has also refused to denounce the Israeli government for its onslaught against the Palestinians. Instead, she touts the line that the resistance of the Palestinian people is equivalent to the violence of the Israeli state, which, with imperialist support, has dispossessed and abused them for well-over a half-century. "We need," pleaded May, "to immediately put a stop to this terrible cycle of violence which is killing innocent Israeli and Palestinian children."

Over the past decade the NDP has joined the rest of the Canadian political establishment in fully solidarizing itself with the Zionist state. During the 2008 Israeli blitzkrieg against Gaza, the NDP, then led by Jack Layton, remained all but silent, only belatedly issuing a brief statement, which made a pro forma appeal for an end to all hostilities and failed to condemn the Israeli attack.

Mulcair has professed a slavish loyalty to the aggressive policies of the Israeli state, famously declaring in 2008, "I am an ardent supporter of Israel in all situations and in all circumstances". In 2010 Mulcair joined with the Conservatives and the Liberals to smear "Israeli Apartheid Week"—a pro-Palestinian campaign mounted on dozens of Canadian university campuses—as "anti-semitic".

When Libby Davies, the NDP House Leader in 2010, responded to an interviewer by stating that she believed the occupation of Palestine began in 1948, she was relentlessly hounded by the press and all the parties in parliament and unceremoniously forced by Layton, Mulcair and the NDP

caucus to issue a public apology.

The NDP's position on Palestine is of a piece with its pro-imperialist policy in every corner of the globe.

The party backed NATO's 1999 war on Serbia. It supported Canada's counter-insurgency war in Afghanistan for many years, backing the attempt of US imperialism, along with its NATO allies such as Canada, to take control of a strategically-located country in the resource-rich region of Central Asia. Only after anti-war sentiment became widespread did the NDP issue a call for a gradual and orderly withdrawal of Canadian troops. But in 2008, as part of its aborted coalition deal with the Liberals, the NDP announced it would serve as the junior partner in a Liberal-led government committed to waging war in Afghanistan through 2011.

In its first major vote as the Official Opposition, the NDP voted to extend Canada's participation in the war against Libya that had been initiated by former colonial powers France and Britain with the backing of Washington. Endorsing the lie that the Libyan war was about protecting civilians, the NDP emerged once again as a political accomplice in a war of aggression that killed 40,000 people, decimated the country's infrastructure and left the Libyan people prostrate before rival gangs of Islamic militias.

More recently, the NDP lent its full support to Canada's military assistance to the 2013 French intervention in Mali and has signaled it would be ready to support further Canadian Armed Forces deployments in northern Africa, including potentially in the Central African Republic.

The NDP has also backed the Canadian government's highly provocative actions in Ukraine—actions that are fueling a confrontation with Russia that could trigger a war between nuclear-armed states. To applause from the NDP, the Harper government supported the US-German orchestrated, fascist-spearheaded coup that overthrew Ukraine's elected president in late February; has imposed sanctions on Moscow and deployed fighter jets to Eastern Europe so as to bolster the US-NATO drive to bully and threaten Russia; and has depicted those in eastern Ukraine who are opposing the ultra-right, nationalist government in Kiev as Russian-government operatives and terrorists.



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