

Trudeau reaffirms Canada's support for Israeli aggression

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has reaffirmed Canada's full-throated support for Israel and the Zionist state's continuing dispossession and oppression of the Palestinian people.

He did so earlier this month, after his government was criticized by the Conservatives and sections of his own Liberal Party for Canada's vote last month in favour of a non-binding United Nations' resolution that endorsed a "two-state" solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

For a decade-and-a-half, since the days of the Paul Martin Liberal government, Canada has systematically voted with the United States, Israel, and a handful of tiny Pacific island states, which are dependent on US aid, against any and all UN resolutions that criticize Israel.

But in November it broke with this practice in what Liberal government officials and Trudeau personally have described as a one-time gesture, meant to distance Canada from yet another provocative announcement from Washington that encourages Israel to formally annex the West Bank. On November 18, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that Washington no longer considers the Israeli settlements illegally constructed in the occupied West Bank to be in violation of international law.

The Liberal government has insisted that Canada's vote in favour of the UN "Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination" motion in no way represents a lessening of Ottawa's steadfast support for Israel. It simply wanted to indicate that Ottawa remains formally committed to a two-state solution, under conditions where the Trump administration has all but ceased to pay even lip-service to it.

The resolution refers to East Jerusalem, which was illegally seized by Israel following the 1967 Six Day War, and the West Bank. It also refers to a 2004 International Court of Justice decision that criticized Israel's massive security barrier or wall as an obstacle to the establishment of a Palestinian state. The resolution has been voted on annually at the UN for over a decade, along with other resolutions criticizing Israel's violations of international law, and has regularly secured large majorities. In all of last month's other votes, Canada continued to side with Israel and the US.

In comments to parliamentarians and members of Canadian Jewish organizations attending a Parliament Hill ceremony December 9 marking the approach of Hanukkah, Trudeau

emphasized Ottawa's strong support for Israel.

Referring to the criticism of Canada's recent UN vote, Trudeau said, "I understand that many of you were alarmed by this decision. The government felt that it was important to reiterate its commitment to a two-states-for-two-peoples solution at a time when its prospects appear increasingly under threat.

"But let me be very clear ... Canada remains a steadfast supporter of Israel, and Canada will always defend Israel's right to live in security."

In keeping with what has increasingly become standard practice within Canada's political establishment, Trudeau went on to denounce a recent protest at Toronto's York University against a meeting meant to whitewash the crimes of Israel and, in particular, the Israeli Defence Forces, as "anti-Semitic." In doing so, Canada's prime minister deliberately conflated opposition to the Israeli state and its aggression with animosity toward Jews.

Ottawa's staunch support for Israel, under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, is an important element in Canadian imperialism's growing presence in the oil-rich Middle East—a policy that it tries to justify with reference to "human rights" and "international law," even as it and its allies run roughshod over them.

Canada has participated in virtually every US-led war in the Middle East and Central Asia over the past three decades. This includes the war in Afghanistan, where Canadian Armed Forces' personnel were deployed war for more than a decade, beginning in 2001; NATO's 2011 "regime change" war in Libya; and the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq since 2014. Canada's military and intelligence industries have close ties to both Israel and Saudi Arabia, adding a further layer of Canadian complicity in Israel's ongoing aggression against the Palestinians, Lebanon, Syria and Iran, and in the Saudi monarchy's ruinous war on Yemen. As the result of its deal with Riyadh to supply \$15 billion worth of Light Armored Vehicles, Canada is now one of the biggest arms-exporters to the Middle East.

The Trudeau government's decision to cast a single, meaningless vote at the UN in support of "Palestinian self-determination" does nothing to change the fact that apart from

the US, Canada has an unmatched record among Western states in supporting Israeli war crimes and the illegal occupation of Palestinian land. From the Zionist regime's bombardment of Lebanon in 2006 to the 2014 slaughter of over 2,000 Palestinians in the open-air prison that is the Gaza Strip, successive Canadian governments have given Israel a blank cheque to do as it pleases. Trudeau, who was Liberal Party leader at the time of the 2014 war, described the Israeli army's indiscriminate massacring of civilians, including women and children, as "justifiable self-defence."

When US President Donald Trump provocatively recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017, effectively ending any support for a two-state solution, Canada stood conspicuously alone among G-7 states in refusing to criticize Washington. Ottawa's current effort to pose as a committed supporter of an internationally negotiated two-state solution to the conflict is made even more absurd by Canada's repeated opposition to UN resolutions calling for Israel to respect the Geneva Conventions for Palestinian prisoners, respect the international status of Jerusalem, and grant Palestinian control over land according to the internationally-recognized pre-1967 borders in the region.

At home, the Canadian ruling elite underscores its support for an Israel led by the far-right Zionist and close Trump ally Benjamin Netanyahu by increasingly branding any criticism of Israel's actions as anti-Semitic

In denouncing the York University protest, Trudeau made common cause with the likes of federal Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer, Ontario's rightwing populist premier Doug Ford, and the hard-right *Toronto Sun*. Ford, who in the name of "free speech" has threatened to penalize universities that fail to provide a platform for far-right ideologues, was especially vituperative, denouncing the protest against the pro-Israeli Defence Forces meeting as "racist" and "hate-filled."

In reality, the York meeting was a provocation. Titled "Reservist on Duty: Hear from former Israeli Defence Forces soldiers," it was addressed by former IDF personnel and attended and "defended" by members of the Jewish Defence League, an ultra-right organization that even the FBI has termed a "terrorist" organization.

In its report on the event, the *Canadian Jewish News* cited Jewish students who were supportive of the meeting, but felt embarrassed and uncomfortable at the behaviour of the event's organizers, which they said appeared calculated to provoke violent altercations with those protesting Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and the presence on campus of Israeli military personnel.

The Canadian ruling elite is using bogus charges of anti-Semitism to delegitimize, and potentially criminalize criticism of Israel, as well as left-wing opposition to militarism and war. This is in line with international developments, as seen by the concerted campaign of the British establishment to smear Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters as anti-

Semitic.

In 2016, Canada's House of Commons passed a resolution condemning by a large majority the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement for its "demonization and delegitimization" of Israel. Speaking in support of the motion, Liberals and Conservative MPs tarred BDS proponents as anti-Semites.

The BDS movement advances a Palestiniannationalist perspective that blames the entire Israeli population for the Zionist regime's crimes and denies the possibility of uniting Jewish and Arab workers in a common struggle on the basis of a socialist program. However, the Canadian political establishment's attempts to smear it as racist, and provide a pretext for its outright banning, are utterly reactionary.

The purportedly "left," trade union-backed New Democratic Party plays a duplicitous role in covering for Canadian imperialism's support for the Israeli regime. The NDP voted against the anti-BDS resolution in 2016 and issued pro forma criticisms of Israeli repression when Palestinian protesters in the Gaza Strip were gunned down by the Israeli army in 2018. However, in both 2015 and 2019, the party prevented candidates with pro-Palestinian views from running in the federal election.

During the slaughter in Gaza in 2014, then-NDP leader Thomas Mulcair remained silent on Tel Aviv's savage bombardment of defenceless civilians, focusing his ire instead on the rockets fired into Israel in response by Hamas. In 2017, the party's current federal leader, Jagmeet Singh, then an Ontario MPP, took a trip to Israel sponsored by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. Earlier this year, the party leadership blocked a resolution on Palestinian rights from being discussed at the NDP's biennial convention.

The NDP's pro-Israel stance is inseparable from the party's pro-war, pro-imperialist politics as a whole. While spouting phrases about "democracy" and "human rights," Canada's social democrats have endorsed almost every war of aggression involving the Canadian Armed Forces since the 1990s, and they fully support the Liberal government's plans to spend tens of billions on procuring new fleets of warships and warplanes.



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