Protests across Canada oppose Israel's onslaught against Gaza

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19 October 2023

Thousands of people have turned out at dozens of demonstrations and vigils across Canada over the last two weeks to protest Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza launched after an attack by Hamas on October 8.

At least 1,000 people turned out for an emergency demonstration outside the Israeli consulate in downtown Toronto Tuesday night following the Israeli air strike on the Al-Alhi Baptist Hospital in Gaza where hundreds of men, women and children had taken shelter. Hundreds were killed in the attack.

Demonstrators carrying the Palestinian flag and chanting "Free, free Palestine," shut down the major Yonge and Bloor intersection for several hours under the surveillance of hundreds of riot police, who ultimately arrested one person on unspecified charges.

Hundreds also gathered in neighboring Mississauga Tuesday evening to protest the hospital massacre and demand an end to Israel's siege of Gaza—a war crime that is fully supported by Justin Trudeau's trade union- and NDP-backed Liberal government and by the Biden administration in Washington DC.

Toronto's NDP Mayor Olivia Chow denounced initial pro-Palestinian protests on October 9 as support for Hamas and vowed to dispatch the police to "address any suspected incidents of hate."

Montreal also saw more than 1,500 demonstrate Tuesday night outside the US Consulate on Sainte-Catherine Street, with chants of "Solidarité avec le Palestine," before matching to the nearby Israeli Consulate.

"We want to see an end to this campaign of genocide that is currently happening," Sarah Shamy of the Palestinian Youth Movement told the *Montreal Gazette.* "We want to see an end to the complicity of the western states, mainly Canada and the US, who every year send billions of dollars in military aid."

As many as 300 people gathered on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery on October 9 to demand freedom for Palestine. "My people have been oppressed for over 75 years and I'm here to stand mainly with my family, my parents and my two sisters," Nasser Najjar, a Vancouver resident who has family trapped in Gaza, told CBC News.

Vancouver Mayor Ken Sim denounced the rally as "anti-Israeli" and announced that he would dispatch the police to threaten protesters. "When informed of these rallies, I spoke with the VPD and am encouraged they will investigate and address any incidents of hate," the mayor said in a statement.

A large turnout is expected for further pro-Palestinian rallies Thursday night outside Vancouver City Hall and Saturday at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Hundreds turned out for an emergency protest outside the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton on Wednesday after a protest on Sunday where demonstrators lined 97th Street with Palestinian flags to rally support for a ceasefire. There was also a protest in Calgary on Sunday outside City Hall demanding an end to the Israeli military operation. "I'm against wars and killing because most of it is innocent people," Miriam Meir, a member of Jews for Palestine, who previously lived in Israel, told CTV News. "It's a very tragic situation occurring."

Protests and vigils demanding relief for the Palestinians have also been held in the nation's capital, Ottawa, where a large crowd gathered Sunday outside Parliament; Windsor, Ontario, where 1,000 protested Tuesday; St. Johns, Newfoundland, where 100 turned out Sunday at the Colonial Building; and Whitehorse, Yukon, which saw a small group march through downtown demanding an end to the genocide.

Amid the outpouring of opposition to Israel's onslaught across Canada, the entire political establishment, from the Conservatives, led by far-right "Freedom" Convoy supporter Pierre Poilievere, to the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, have rallied behind the attack on Gaza and bitterly denounced any support for the Palestinians. Their attempts to discredit all support for the Palestinians as "antisemitic" are especially hypocritical given the fact that representatives from all political parties rose as one in the House of Commons less than a month ago to applaud Nazi war criminal Yaroslav Hunka.

Ontario Tory Premier Doug Ford's government has moved to censure NDP MPP Sarah Jama and block her from speaking in the legislature after she released a statement on X (Twitter) last week voicing her support for an immediate ceasefire and de-escalation. "We must look to the solution to this endless cycle of death and destruction; end all occupation of Palestinian land and end apartheid," Jama wrote.

To this Ford and his party have reacted with fury, demanding that the MPP take down her post and resign. A Progressive Conservative motion accuses Jama of "anti-Semitic and discriminatory statements" which "defended Hamas." Meanwhile Ontario NDP leader Marit Stiles denounced Jama's statement for not aligning with the party's positions, and required her to apologize to keep her spot in the caucus.

The federal NDP Foreign Affairs Critic, Heather McPherson, released a miserable statement on Friday, October 13 which blamed both sides for the human rights disaster and mass suffering in Gaza caused by decades of brutal Israeli repression, and insisted only that the Trudeau government call for the "respect of international law."

The Quebec ruling elite has also made clear that it supports Israel's onslaught, with CAQ Premier François Legault describing pro-Palestinian demonstrations as "shameful."

Canadian imperialism has a decades-long military-strategic partnership with the United States, contributing to the bloody neo-colonial occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the NATO regime-change war in Libya.

Canada is currently playing a major role in the war against Russia in Ukraine—which it helped prepare politically and militarily, including by providing training and equipment for fascist forces and broader sections of the Ukrainian military. Trudeau spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday to reassure him that even as Canada joins with the other NATO and G-7 powers in supporting Israel in making good on its threats to bloodily reconfigure the Middle East, it will continue to assist Ukraine in waging war with Russia "for as long as it takes." Since the Ukraine war erupted, Canada has provided Kiev with more $2 billion in weaponry and $9 billion in overall support.

Canada has played a significant role in arming Israel for the repression of the Palestinians and to serve as a strategic outpost for US and Canadian imperialism in the Middle East. According to Global Affairs Canada, the Canadian government provided more than $21 million in military materiel in 2022 following on a record $26 million in 2021.

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