

With pseudo-left Quebec Solidaire's support, Quebec National Assembly endorses Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza

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In Quebec, as elsewhere in Canada and around the world, mass demonstrations continue against the Israeli regime's genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. More than 9,200 Palestinians, including some 4,000 children, have already lost their lives in attacks by Israeli Defence Forces.

Workers and young people are opposing both the murderous actions of Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government, and the unconditional support it has received from the imperialist powers, Canada included.

Justin Trudeau's federal Liberal government has given unreserved support to Israel's savage onslaught. And Ottawa stands with Washington, for eight decades its closest partner, as it seeks to use the conflict to prepare and provoke a wider war in the Middle East, so as to advance its predatory interests and strengthen its hand against Russia and China.

Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly have justified the criminal actions of the Israeli state by avowing that it has the "right" and "duty" to "defend itself," as if slaughtering thousands of defenceless civilians has anything whatsoever to do with self-defence. The federal Liberal government has also rejected the idea of a ceasefire. Defence Minister Bill Blair has even blamed Hamas ally Islamic Jihad for the bombing of al-Ahli hospital, which killed close to hundreds of people on October 17, one of the countless war crimes committed by Israel.

In Quebec, the entire political class—federalist as well as sovereignist—is backing the Israeli state as it pummels the population of Gaza on a daily basis, blocks the entry of food, water, medicines and fuel, and has forcibly displaced over a million people from the north of the enclave. This unanimous support also includes the province's pseudo-left party, Québec Solidaire (QS).

On October 17, Quebec's National Assembly adopted a motion that echoes the pro-Israeli line of the United States, Canada and the major European powers giving Israel carte blanche in its war crimes against the Palestinian people. The motion condemns "the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas" and demands the "immediate and unconditional release of the populations taken hostage by Hamas." It cynically deplores "the escalation of violence" which has "resulted in the deaths of many civilians" and calls for "respect for international law by all parties."

Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) from the Coalition

Avenir Quebec (CAQ), the right-wing chauvinist "Quebec First" party that has ruled the province since 2018, as well as those from the Quebec Liberal Party, voted unanimously in favor of the motion. During the short debate that preceded the vote, International Relations Minister Martine Biron absolved Israel of any responsibility for the three-quarters-of-a-century long oppression and dispossession of the Palestinians that led to the October 7 uprising. Claiming that "the terrorist acts of Hamas...have absolutely no justification," she excused Israel's genocidal actions by declaring the imperialist-backed Zionist state's absolute right to "defend itself in the face of attacks."

The 16 MNAs from the Parti Québécois and Québec Solidaire abstained from voting on the grounds that the motion proposed by the CAQ government was "unbalanced" in that it made no mention of the Palestinian deaths. This futile gesture has nothing to do with any real opposition to the violence perpetrated by Israel. Rather, it is an attempt to keep the popular anger provoked by this violence within the framework of official bourgeois politics.

QS sought to give its abstention a humanitarian veneer with references to "respect for international law." However, the reality is that without its collaboration, the CAQ government's motion would never have passed—a fact acknowledged by QS in a press release that says, "We nevertheless decided to consent to the tabling of the motion to allow it to be adopted."

During the debate in the National Assembly, Québec Solidaire MNA Guillaume Cliche-Rivard justified his party's political cowardice—its refusal to block the CAQ's pro-Israel motion—on the grounds that it was "essential that this Assembly condemn terrorism." Obediently bowing to the war propaganda of the imperialist forces, all Solidaire MNAs observed the minute of silence called for by the CAQ government "in memory of the Israeli victims."

A few days later, on October 20, Québec Solidaire MNA and candidate for the post of QS co-leader Ruba Ghazal, herself of Palestinian origin, took part in a press conference with representatives from various unions and the Independent Jewish Voice of Montreal to call on CAQ Premier François Legault and Trudeau to "strongly condemn the collective punishment that Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."

The futility of such an appeal to Legault is obvious. Just a few days earlier, the latter had demonstrated his unconditional and

unwavering support for all of Israel's actions by declaring that, despite civilian casualties, it was "understandable that Israel wants to defend itself so that Hamas will stop doing things like this."

Ghazal also revealed her party's pro-imperialist orientation. While declaring her "solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people" and evoking "international law," she denounced the war crimes committed by "both sides." She thus equated the Zionist state's long and violent oppression of the Palestinian people with the resistance offered by the oppressed Palestinians.

With its support for the indiscriminate slaughter of thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children, QS is signaling its alignment and complicity with Canadian imperialism, which supports Israel not out of any concern for the Jewish people—whose entry to Canada it barred at the height of the Nazi's crimes—but to advance its own predatory interests.

The Hamas attack on October 7 was a mass uprising by a people who have lived for the past 17 years under a blockade that has turned Gaza into an open-air prison; a people systematically oppressed by the same state that ethnically cleansed them at its creation three-quarters of century ago. For QS to condemn "both sides" equally under these conditions is to defend the oppressor.

This is nothing new for QS, which since its foundation in 2006 has consistently supported "human rights imperialism," i.e., the efforts of the US, Canada and other major powers to selectively invoke real or invented human rights violations to cover up the predatory and reactionary nature of their military interventions and regime-change wars around the world.

To give just a few examples, in 2011 Québec Solidaire MNA Amir Khadir voiced his party's support for NATO's air war against Libya and the imperialist regime-change operation, cynically declaring that "the Libyan people are asking for intervention." QS has also supported the regime-change operation in Syria, presenting the civil war fomented by the imperialist powers, with the help of the Gulf monarchies, as a popular "revolution" against Assad.

More recently, QS has been complicit in the imperialist campaign for regime change in Iran, under the pretext of defending "women's rights." On this occasion, Ghazal had the National Assembly adopt a motion "condemning the violent repression of the demonstrations," without mentioning Washington's punitive sanctions and threats of war against Iran.

QS also fully backs the US/NATO war on Russia in Ukraine and the aggressive US-led campaign to prepare for war against China. Both of these conflicts arise from the drive of the US, Canada and the other major imperialist powers to defeat their geostrategic rivals and redivide the world so as to secure their global predominance. In 2021, Québec Solidaire MP Sol Zanetti signed an open letter condemning China for "genocide" against the country's Uighur minority and demanding the replacement of Beijing as the host city for the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Then, at the start of NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine, QS pushed through a motion in which the National Assembly denounced Russian "aggression" while ignoring NATO's provocative role in Eastern Europe and its long-standing preparations to confront Russia militarily in order to seize its critical mineral resources and prepare a war with China.

This sordid history stems from the nationalist, pro-capitalist orientation of QS, a party that represents wealthy middle-class strata whose privileges rest on imperialist crimes abroad and attacks on the working class at home.

The "left" Quebec nationalist and *indépendantiste* circles from which QS emerged long ago abandoned any pretense of being "anti-imperialist." The Quebec independence project is entirely reactionary. It is aimed at reshuffling the borders of North America to create a third imperialist state in the western hemisphere so that Quebec's French-speaking capitalist elite can better exploit its "own" working class and stake claim to an exclusive share of the booty of US-led imperialist brigandry abroad. Both pro-independence parties, QS and PQ, have taken the position that a capitalist *République du Québec* will need an army.

Last week, the PQ's federal sister party, the Bloc Québécois (BQ), went out of its way to make clear that it is opposed to calls for a ceasefire, like that made in an Oct. 27 UN General Assembly resolution. After some NDP, Green and Liberal MPs sent a letter to Trudeau calling for him to advocate for a "ceasefire," the BQ declared it favored a "temporary truce," while insisting on the "need to neutralize Hamas." A temporary truce would be an utter fraud, leaving Israel free to resume its destructive ground invasion at a time of its choosing.

The unions in Quebec have for the most part adopted the same line as QS, condemning violence "on both sides" and urging workers and youth to direct their energies at making vain appeals to the Trudeau and Legault governments to call for a ceasefire.

Workers and young people taking part in demonstrations against the atrocities committed against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are facing a common pro-Israeli front from the political establishment, the trade unions and the pseudo-left. But there is an alternative: the turn to the international working class and the fight to connect the struggle against the imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza with the powerful social and economic struggles involving millions of workers in the major capitalist powers over recent months.

On Thursday, the Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality provided a strong demonstration of this perspective in practice with a rally organized jointly with Students for Justice in Palestine at Wayne State University in Detroit. The rally heard a statement from autoworker Will Lehman, who ran for the UAW presidency last year as a socialist, calling for the mobilization of the working class against the Israeli onslaught and imperialist war.

As SEP national secretary Joseph Kishore declared in his speech to the protest, "The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality support working class action to stop the shipment of any items to Israel that could have any conceivable military use. The massive social power of the international working class must be mobilized in a political general strike, to shut down production and stop this genocide."



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