

Canada's ruling elite witch-hunting opponents of the imperialist-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza

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Canada's political and media establishment is engaged in a vicious witch-hunt against the opponents of the imperialist-backed Israeli genocide of the Palestinians of Gaza. The firing of workers, blacklisting of students, and other attempts at intimidation are part of an international drive by ruling elites in all major imperialist powers to smear and suppress the growing opposition to the brutal siege and slaughter of the people of Gaza, which has found expression in protests around the globe involving millions of workers and youth.

The witch-hunt has been spearheaded by Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives and their close political ally, the Doug Ford-led Ontario Tory government, and by *Toronto Sun* and *National Post* columnists and other far-right figures within the corporate media. It has been facilitated by the Liberal government and its allies in the trade union bureaucracy and the New Democratic Party (NDP). This was graphically demonstrated by the trade union-backed NDP's expulsion of Sarah Jama from its Ontario legislature caucus for her statements in support of the Palestinians. Jama's expulsion paved the way for Ford's hard-right Progressive Conservative government to push a motion of censure through the legislature, under which Jama is prevented from speaking on any issue until she retracts her statements and "apologizes."

Ford's Minister of Colleges and Universities, Jill Dunlop, is demanding Ontario's post-secondary institutions sanction student unions and clubs that have defended the Palestinian people's right to resist occupation. She has also smeared individual students and academics who have defended Hamas' actions as a popular uprising against Israel's 17-year blockade of the tiny enclave as anti-Semites from the floor of the Ontario legislature.

Protesters opposing the Israeli state's three-quarters-of-a-century-long systematic dispossession and suppression of the Palestinians and demanding an immediate ceasefire have been vilified in the corporate media as abettors of terrorism. Popular pro-Palestinian slogans, such as "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" have been declared off-limits and absurdly denounced as "anti-Semitic."

In one of the most extreme examples of this trend, police laid

"disturbing the peace" charges this week against Wesam Khaled, one of the main organizers of pro-Palestinian protests in Calgary, for leading chants of the "From the river to the sea" slogan at a Nov. 5 rally. Khaled, who is barred from attending further protests at least pending a Dec. 19 court hearing, is being targeted for exemplary punishment, with police adding "a hate motivation" to their "disturbing the peace" charge.

After four workers at Moxies Restaurant on Toronto's University Avenue came out spontaneously to cheer on a Palestinian solidarity march on October 21, B'nai Brith Canada mounted a campaign to have the workers fired. Moxies—a restaurant chain with 58 locations in Canada and the USA—dutifully complied.

Kevin Vuong, the MP for the downtown Toronto riding of Spadina-Fort York where the largest pro-Palestinian demonstrations have occurred, is waging a campaign to dox anyone who expresses support for the Palestinian uprising on social media. He has notified the police and demanded that the individuals be charged with supporting terrorism. Hamas is listed as a terrorist organization by the Canadian state.

Long-time Liberal Party advisor and journalist Warren Kinsella has demanded the arrest and deportation of pro-Palestinian activists. The demand was endorsed by Ben Mulroney, a television talk show host and the son of former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

Faced with public outrage, Kinsella later deleted his tweet, and Mulroney cynically walked back his comments, stating without a hint of irony, that "I fully support everyone's right to peacefully protest. But if that crosses the line into intimidation/making anyone feel unsafe, I expect our laws to be applied fairly. I apologize if my position was construed as anything but supportive of one's rights to free speech/assembly."

Commenters noted that Israeli nationalist demonstrations frequently feature chants of "Death to the Arabs" and other genocidal incitement, such as "Another Nakba is coming!" None of this elicits so much as a peep of disapproval, because the entire Canadian ruling class and its press are complicit in the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people.

Students have also been targeted for reprisals merely for speaking out. Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) has retained former Nova Scotia Chief Justice Michael MacDonald to “review” an Open Letter, signed by 74 TMU students expressing support for the Palestinian uprising. TMU’s Lincoln Alexander Law School condemned the letter as “anti-Semitic.” Multiple prominent law firms have declared their intent to blacklist the students.

Writing in the right-wing *Financial Post*, lawyer Howard Levitt noted that one of the partners in his firm declared, “The first question that we will ask any potential new hire or student from Toronto Metropolitan University is whether or not they signed the letter condoning Hamas,” the implication being that such people would never be hired. Levitt further demanded that all 74 students be expelled.

In response, more than 350 lawyers, under the umbrella “Legal Profession Against Retaliation,” have signed on to an open letter committing themselves to defend and not discriminate against those who are being slandered and blacklisted for their support for the Palestinians. The letter states: “We reject the notion that it is anti-Semitic, hateful, or illegitimate to contextualize the October 7, 2023 attack. Similarly, we reject the notion that it is anti-Semitic, hateful, or illegitimate to express support for Palestinians in the face of ongoing Israeli apartheid and genocide. This is legitimate Charter-protected political expression.”

TMU’s inquisition against its own students follows ongoing efforts by the administration at Toronto’s York University to deregister several student representative associations for signing a pro-Palestine statement. These threats prompted widespread opposition on campus, including a well-attended student rally.

At the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, administrators altered artwork created by four Palestinian artists for an exhibition on “death.” They removed the words “Palestine” and “exile” from a painting, replacing the former with “West Bank.” Only after an 18-hour sit-in by the artists and protests outside the museum, including by Jewish artists, were the works restored to their original form.

The trade union bureaucracies are complicit in Israel’s genocidal onslaught on the Palestinians because they serve as a key pillar of support for the Trudeau government. Just like the Biden administration, Trudeau has given Canada’s unconditional support to the far-right Netanyahu government as it bombs men, women, and children indiscriminately and attempts to ethnically cleanse Gaza.

Those few union officials who have defended the Palestinians in any way have come in for ruthless attacks. Fred Hahn, Ontario president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), has been the target of right-wing attacks since he posted a statement on October 7 declaring, “Resistance is fruitful and no matter what some might say, resistance brings progress.” Hahn was pilloried in the capitalist press, and

slandered multiple times by Ontario Premier Ford as an “anti-Semite.” Bowing to pressure, Hahn apologized on October 21. But that was not enough. Some 25 pro-Zionist CUPE members have now launched a civil lawsuit against the union, alleging ‘discrimination and antisemitism.’ The SLAPP suit takes issue with references to matters of historical fact which have appeared in various union resolutions, such as that Israel is an apartheid state illegally occupying Palestinian lands.

The witch hunt has claimed the head of Camile Awada, who resigned on November 7 as the leader of CAPE, the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, Canada’s third largest union for federal government employees. In a 2019 Facebook post, Awada declared that “The European Zionists are the true Aryan race. They look down at the world as if we are cattle. Israel is the illegitimate Zionist terrorist apartheid state that is the root of all evil!” Awada was commenting on a news article describing how African immigrants to Israel from the Ethiopian Jewish community were involuntarily injected with Depo Provera to prevent them from having children.

In mid-October, Palestinian Canadian journalist Zahraa Al-Akhrass was fired from her position at Global News while on maternity leave. She was dismissed for her personal social media posts, which exposed Palestinian suffering and criticized the capitalist press for its creation of a narrative to excuse, cover up and politically support the Israeli state’s genocide. The WSWS spoke to Al-Akhrass on November 4 at Toronto’s massive solidarity rally.

A key component of the international struggle that must be waged to put a stop to the imperialist-backed genocide of the Palestinians by the Israeli regime is a political struggle to defeat all efforts at censorship and witch-hunting opponents of war. This fight requires a decisive turn to the working class, the only social force capable of leading a mass movement against war and the capitalist system in which it is rooted. Workers and young people protesting in Canada should take up the call raised by the Palestinian trade unions last month for workers to stop all military supplies destined for Israel and halt production of equipment for the IDF.



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