Canada’s Trudeau government reaffirms support for Israel’s Gaza genocide, as crackdown on protests intensifies

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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke with Israeli War Cabinet and former Defence Minister Benny Gantz Wednesday to reassert Ottawa’s “support for Israel and its right to defend itself, in accordance with international law.”

Trudeau called Gantz to underline Canadian imperialism’s backing for Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians, after he faced criticism from the far-right Israeli regime for stating at a press conference Tuesday that the killing of babies, children and other civilians “has to stop.”

Canada, alongside the United States, is among Israel’s closest international allies. In addition to supplying the country with weaponry and maintaining close links with its military, Canada has repeatedly voted at the United Nations together with Washington and a handful of tiny Pacific island states to oppose even the most timid criticisms of Israel. In a recent UN General Assembly vote on a resolution condemning the expansion of settlements and settler-violence in the West Bank, Canada was one of just seven nations to vote against it, along with the US, Israel, Hungary, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Nauru.

In his remarks Tuesday, Trudeau made statements that during past conflicts would have been taken for granted. “I urge the government of Israel to exercise maximum restraint. The world is watching, on TV, on social media—we're hearing the testimonies of doctors, family members, survivors, kids who have lost their parents. The world is witnessing this killing of women, of children, of babies. This has to stop,” he said.

Trudeau did not go so far as to call for a ceasefire, let alone condemn Israel for committing war crimes and violating international law. But the ruling elites in Canada, the US, and Israel are so fully committed to the Netanyahu government’s genocidal onslaught on the Palestinians that not even the most timid and transparently hypocritical criticisms can be tolerated. Netanyahu responded on Twitter/X, tagging Trudeau in a post that blamed Hamas for all civilian deaths and rejected any criticism of Israel’s savage slaughter. Within Canada, pro-Zionist forces from the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre and B’nai Brith Canada denounced Trudeau’s remarks, as did a cabal of neo-conservative and far-right newspaper columnists.

Trudeau responded by calling Gantz to make clear to the Israeli regime, Washington and the Canadian public that Canada “stands with Israel” as it commits genocide against the Palestinians. After declaring that Israel has the “right” to “defend itself,” Trudeau, according to a Prime Minister’s Office readout, condemned “Hamas’ terrorist attacks, including the atrocious use of Palestinian civilians as human shields.” The conversation concluded with Trudeau and Gantz denouncing all opposition to the Israeli onslaught on Gaza as antisemitic. “In the face of the rise of antisemitic events in Canada and around the world, Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Gantz condemned antisemitism in all its forms and agreed on the need to address it head-on,” stated the readout.

Trudeau’s call was all the more significant in that it came just hours after Israel launched its bloody and criminal raid on the al-Shifa hospital, the largest medical centre in Gaza. Citing their own lurid, unsubstantiated claims that Hamas was using the hospital as a command centre, the Israel Defence Forces repeatedly bombarded and fired at the hospital, killing patients and medical workers.

Not even the Prime Minister can make the most tepid criticisms of what everyone can see is the mass slaughter of defenceless civilians by a heavily-armed Israeli state backed by the imperialist powers. This underscores how all-embracing the regime of political censorship and repression against the opponents of the onslaught on Gaza has become.

Propped up by its trade union and New Democratic Party allies, the Trudeau government has retained its fulsome support for the Israeli war machine as it has bombarded hospitals, schools, and other places of refuge, while denying the 2.3 million residents of Gaza access to the most basic necessities of human life, including water, fuel, and food.

The New Democratic Party demonstrated its contempt for democratic rights early on in the Israeli bombardment by expelling the Ontario legislator Sarah Jama from its legislative caucus. Jama had previously issued a statement declaring her solidarity with the Palestinians and condemning Israel as an “apartheid state,” a description supported by the United Nations and Amnesty International. The NDP’s move opened

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the way for Doug Ford's rabidly hard-right Ontario Tory government to censure Jama, thus preventing her from speaking on any issue in the legislature until she repudiates her statement supporting the Palestinians and apologizes.

The trade unions have focused on diverting the mass protests in defence of the Palestinian people that have developed across the country into impotent appeals to the Trudeau government to push for a "ceasefire." Moreover, they have failed to mobilize workers to defend individuals who have been witch-hunted by the political right for declaring their support for the Palestinians, such as Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario President Fred Hahn.

The suppression by the NDP and unions of opposition in the working class and among young people to Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians has emboldened right-wing and far-right forces to step up their smearing and witch-hunting of protesters.

City of Toronto Councillor James Pasternak has submitted a motion to ban Palestinian solidarity protests on City property, calling upon the Ontario Attorney General and the City of Toronto Police to "consult on what steps can be taken quickly to protect the public from such hate speech…" Toronto has seen protests involving tens of thousands over each of the past three weeks.

Speaking to Joe Warmington of the right-wing *Toronto Sun*, and dripping with contempt for democracy, Pasternak fretted, "We're verging on mob rule, where law and order is breaking down, and groups of people who have grievances are taking over public spaces, they're interfering with traffic flow, with commerce, with the movement of emergency vehicles, and they're sucking up an enormous amount of police resources."

After demonstrators shut down the main offices of Scotiabank in Toronto on Thursday Nov 8, answering the call of the Palestinian Youth Movement to "Shut it down for Palestine," Warmington opined, "Is taking over the lobby of one of Canada's largest banks in downtown Toronto to protest Israel considered a hate crime?" Scotiabank has been targeted due to its $500 million stake in Israeli weapons maker Elbit Systems, whose Canadian offices were also shut down the same day.

After three activists briefly interrupted the "Scotiabank Giller Awards for Canadian Fiction" on November 13, holding up signs declaring that "Scotiabank funds genocide," Warmington reveled in the prospect of their imprisonment due to their use of "forged documents" to enter the gala event, and their act to "obstruct, interrupt, interfere with the lawful use, enjoyment or operation of property."

On November 15, Palestinian Canadian doctor and activist Tarek Loubani posted about his imminent arrest by police for the "crime" of smearing ketchup on the office door of his local MP, Peter Fragiskatos, in protest over the Liberal legislator's refusal to demand a cease fire. Loubani was previously imprisoned by the Egyptian dictatorship for attending a demonstration in 2013, and was shot in Gaza by the IDF in 2018.

Those expressing public solidarity with the beleaguered Palestinians of Gaza have been targeted, sometimes successfully, for disciplinary action, up to including termination from their jobs.

• Arij Anwer, a Muslim chaplain at Western University, was fired due to a comment on Twitter, replying to neo-conservative journalist and ex-Tory Senator Linda Frum: "Stop spreading lies of beheading babies or rape of little girls. It's been debunked. No one is celebrating the murder of Israeli babies. Palestinians are mourning the death of their babies. It's incredible how Israel sympathizers simultaneously are the oppressor and the victim."

• Sabreina Dahab, a Trustee with Ontario's Hamilton Wentworth District School board, is under investigation for a "breach of the Trustee Code of Conduct" for tweeting "75 years of violent occupation and apartheid and the expectation is that Palestinians will be passive observers in their genocide?"

• Javier Dávila, a Student Equity Advisor at Toronto District School Board, was suspended for sharing social media posts documenting the Palestinian solidarity activities of students at Marc Garneau High School.

The ruthless campaign of censorship and witch-hunting being mounted by Canada's ruling elite expresses far more their weakness and fear than any strength. They are terrified by the prospect the mass sympathy among workers and young people for the Palestinians could develop into an open challenge to Canadian imperialism's predatory interests and the aggression and wars with which they are advanced around the world.

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