

Tens of thousands protest in Ottawa against Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza

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Over 50,000 people participated in Saturday's "National March on Ottawa," making it the largest protest in Canada to date against the imperialist-backed Israeli genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza.

The protesters in Canada's capital joined millions around the world who have expressed their outrage at the Israeli military's indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children over the past six weeks.

The protest was a massive repudiation of the foul campaign by the political establishment and corporate media to intimidate and witch-hunt those opposing the genocidal assault on the Palestinians of Gaza. From Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on down, all political parties in Parliament have smeared opposition to Israel's brutal onslaught as "antisemitic" and constituting support for Hamas' "terrorism." The New Democratic Party (NDP)—which props up the pro-war, pro-austerity minority federal Liberal government—went so far as to expel one of its elected legislators, Sarah Jama, from its caucus in the Ontario parliament. Jama's "crime" was that she dared to describe Israel as an "apartheid state," which many international organizations have done, and declared her support for the Palestinians.

Estimates of the numbers involved in Saturday's demonstration outside the Canadian Parliament ranged from 50,000 to 100,000. Protests were held elsewhere across Canada last weekend, including in Vancouver on Saturday, where several thousand joined a march from the Art Gallery, and by some 500 in Edmonton Sunday.

Speaking to CBC, one participant in Ottawa, clearly referring to the operational pause currently in place that amounts to an opportunity for the Israeli military to reload in preparation for the next stage in its genocidal campaign, commented, "We won't stop [protesting], and we demand a ceasefire.

"And we won't stop until we get that, and until our people are safe and able to live in their home and their land like they should be. Just like everybody else has the right to have."

In another sign of just how widespread the opposition to the genocide is among working people, a parliamentary e-petition demanding that the Trudeau government call for a permanent ceasefire achieved the largest number of signatures of any e-petition since the practice began in 2015. When the e-petition closed last Thursday, it had been signed by 286,719 people. The Liberal government has 45 days to respond to the petition, but Trudeau has time and again made clear his hostility to a ceasefire.

The ruling class has responded to the popular opposition to Israel's genocidal onslaught with undisguised outrage. In Ontario, the hard-right Progressive Conservative government has witch-hunted students and faculty members at universities who have spoken out against the Israeli regime's bombardment of Gaza. Post-Secondary Education Minister Jill Dunlop read the names of "offenders" into the public record from the floor of the provincial legislature. Dozens of workers and professionals have either been fired or hounded from their jobs due to critical comments made on social media or at protests.

Significant as was the turnout at Saturday's protest, it must be recognized that the political perspective advanced by its organizers, including the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) and Jews Say No to Genocide, was utterly bankrupt. It consists of appeals to Trudeau and the Canadian imperialist establishment as a whole to see the error of their ways and come to the defence of the Palestinian people. As the PYM put it in its announcement of the demonstration, "together, a people's chorus becomes impossible for the Canadian

government to ignore.” This “people’s chorus” would call for an “end to Canadian complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza and colonization of Palestine” and a stop to all Canadian arms sales to Israel.

Who do the protest organizers think they are kidding? Their appeals are made to a Liberal government that both before and since the eruption of the latest Gaza war has defended Israel from all criticism for its violations of international law and war crimes. Indeed, it has stood with the Netanyahu regime in perpetrating genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza no less staunchly than the Biden administration in the US.

In United Nations General Assembly votes, under the Conservative Harper and now the Liberal Trudeau, Canada has joined with the US time and again as the only major countries to refuse to condemn illegal Israeli policies in Gaza and the West Bank, including systematic violence by far-right settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. Ottawa maintains extensive relations with the Israeli military, having supplied it with equipment worth over \$21 million in 2022 alone.

Canada, whether led by avowedly right-wing Conservative or purportedly “progressive” Liberal governments, has, it need be added, participated in virtually every US-led war of aggression over the past three decades—from the 1991 Iraq war and the 1999 NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia, to Afghanistan for a decade beginning in 2001, Libya in 2011, and Syria-Iraq from 2014. Canadian imperialism is presently playing a major role in the US-NATO war on Russia in Ukraine, where it works closely with fascistic forces that laud Stepan Bandera, who led the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists as it collaborated with the Nazis during World War II.

Ottawa’s full-throated support for the far-right Netanyahu regime is not the product of a misjudgement that can be corrected if enough pressure is applied from below. Rather, it is inseparable from US imperialism’s drive to consolidate its hegemony across the Middle East as part of a redivision of the world between the imperialist powers. Canada has depended for over eight decades on US imperialism’s dominant world position to pursue its own global imperialist interests, a policy that the ruling elite is doubling down on in the early stages of a rapidly emerging third world war.

The urgent task facing the tens of thousands who

participated in Saturday’s protest and the hundreds of thousands more who have joined protests across Canada since early October is to turn to the working class, the only social force capable of stopping the genocide in Gaza. Instead of directing worthless appeals to Trudeau and his trade union and NDP allies, protesters should urge workers to stop supplying military equipment and all materials that could serve any conceivable military purpose to Israel. Workers in industries that manufacture or prepare goods destined for the Israeli war machine should be urged to halt production immediately. More broadly, workers from all economic sectors should be called upon to mobilize in a political general strike to oppose the imperialist powers’ backing for Israel’s genocide.

This struggle must be waged on an international basis. Conditions for this are extremely propitious, as has been shown by the global weekly protests in defence of the Palestinians and the increasingly militant struggles of working people around the world against punishing price rises, rampant social inequality and the ever-widening attacks of the capitalist elite on social and democratic rights. To conduct this fight, workers and young people must build a global anti-war movement led by the working class. We urge everyone ready to take up this struggle to contact us today.



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