

Censorship campaign against Roger Waters intensifies on his Latin American tour

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After the censorship campaign against Roger Waters in the US and Europe in the first half of this year because of his opposition to war, fascism and social inequality, the acclaimed 80-year-old singer has been targeted on the Latin American leg of his “This is Not a Drill” tour amid Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Following seven concerts in Brazil at the end of October and beginning of November, several hotels in Uruguay, Argentina and Colombia canceled reservations made for Waters and his band. For the three shows they performed in Uruguay (November 17) and Argentina (November 21 and 22), they were forced to continue staying in Brazil and travel from there to each of them.

In an interview with the Argentine daily *Pagina 12*, Waters said that “This is the Israeli lobby throwing all its weight around.”

In Uruguay, the campaign against Waters was led by the Israeli Central Committee of Uruguay and the Jewish NGO B’nai B’rith. In an email to the Sofitel Montevideo hotel, their representatives wrote that “Roger Waters is a misogynist, xenophobe and anti-Semite, who takes advantage of his fame as an artist to lie and spew his hatred against Israel and all Jews.” In clear intimidation, they added that if the hotel were to host Waters, it would be, “even if it doesn’t want to, a propagator of the hatred that this man exudes and will be contributing to the rise of Jewophobia.”

In Argentina and Chile, where the singer performed over the weekend, Jewish organizations brought lawsuits in an attempt to prevent Waters from performing. Both requests were denied by the courts. The Delegation of Argentine Israeli Associations (DAIA) based its legal request on Waters’ alleged “anti-Semitic expressions and messages during his performance in Uruguay” and his “discrimination, advocacy of crime and incitement to collective violence.”

The cancellation of hotel reservations and the legal

actions against Waters in Latin America are a clear effort to silence an artist known worldwide for his denunciations of the resurgence of fascism in the world, the imperialist war by the US and the European powers against Russia in Ukraine and his longstanding denunciations of Israel’s crimes against the Palestinians.

Accusations of antisemitism against Waters have been the main element of the censorship campaign against him. At one of his concerts in Buenos Aires, he said that this claim is “based on malicious lies that have been told about me.” Waters further stated, “The reason they won’t let me stay in hotels in Buenos Aires is because I believe in human rights. I do. I always have.”

Despite this effort, Waters’ concerts in Latin America, like his previous ones in the US and Europe, have attracted tens of thousands of people. At the concert in São Paulo, Brazil, on November 11, Waters sang to 40,000 people with messages on the big screen of “Stop the Genocide” and presenting several US presidents, including Joe Biden, as “war criminals.”

In an interview with TV Brasil on October 25, Waters had declared his resolute opposition to the oppression of the Palestinian people, saying emotionally: “it’s extremely important to resist and say: ‘No more genocide!’... I’m almost crying here... My heart isn’t here in Brasilia, it’s there. There is no way to accept what the Israeli government is doing, with the permission of the US, the UK, France and most of Europe. But not the people. The demonstrations in the streets have been enormous.”

The efforts to silence the artist come amid the ethnic cleansing operation by the Israeli army, which, after expelling more than a million Palestinians from the north of the Gaza Strip, is preparing to take its offensive to the south. The Biden administration, which is Israel’s closest supporter, has insisted that there is no “red line” for its genocidal offensive.

The openly genocidal character of Israel's war on Gaza and the unrestricted support of the US and European governments for the Netanyahu government are being answered by demonstrations of tens of millions of people around the world. In response, since the beginning of the massacre in Gaza, governments in the capitalist centers have sought to censor pro-Palestinian opposition under the false accusation of antisemitism.

These repressive acts are part of an acceleration of preparations to violently suppress all domestic political opposition. The positions defended at the concerts of the artist and co-founder of Pink Floyd express opposition to the genocide in Gaza by millions of workers and young people, who link the brutal conditions faced by Palestinians with the injustices experienced in their own countries. This is why pro-Israeli organizations are acting to ban Waters' concerts with the support of capitalist governments around the world.

Efforts to censor Waters were intensified after the singer launched his 2022 US tour with denunciations of the imperialist powers for provoking the war in Ukraine. In the first half of this year, Waters' principled positions were met with accusations of antisemitism by the US State Department and in Germany, where the singer was threatened with the cancellation of his concerts by the entire political establishment.

Waters' Latin American tour came amid growing geostrategic tensions in the region. US imperialism sees domination of Latin America, which has forged growing economic relations with China at the expense of the US, as indispensable to its global drive to war. Earlier this month, this was expressed in diplomatic provocations staged by the Israeli government, with the full support of the Biden administration, against the government of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party - PT) with the aim of pressuring Brasilia to align itself with the war against Gaza and the US war preparations against Iran.

Despite the criticism of Israel's war on Gaza by nominally "left-wing" presidents in Latin America – including Colombia's Gustavo Petro, Chile's Gabriel Boric and Lula himself – they have played a politically criminal role in covering up for the Biden administration, particularly its unrestricted support for Israel. Significantly, none of them has spoken out against the censorship campaign against Roger Waters in Latin America.

In Brazil, this had already been anticipated by the Lula government's response, at the end of May, to a petition to

prevent the musician from entering Brazil, signed by a representative of the Israeli Confederation of Brazil (CONIB). Lula's justice minister, Flavio Dino, reportedly assured a member of the Supreme Court that Waters would be arrested if he "wears a Nazi uniform at a concert in Brazil." Waters has used this character in his performances over the last four decades to denounce fascism, but it has been deliberately misrepresented, even as ruling class circles themselves turn toward fascism in response to the growing opposition in the working class.

Since this episode, representatives of the Lula government's justice ministry have held several meetings with members of CONIB, which has been carrying out a sordid campaign to equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism and silence opposition to the Palestinian genocide. Last week, CONIB obtained an injunction ordering the deletion of several social media posts made by Breno Altman, himself a journalist of Jewish background who is a member of the PT and a critic of Israel's actions in Gaza.

All Latin American governments work under the fundamental premise of defending capitalist interests and the big corporations in the region and will work with all necessary methods to prevent the demonstrations of millions against the war in Gaza from taking organized form in the Latin American working class.

What the entire Latin American ruling elite fears most is that the growing protests against the genocide in Gaza will fuel a broad radicalization of the working class and youth. Many Latin American countries are home to large Arab and Palestinian communities who, along with the masses of workers and young people, have watched with horror Israel's criminal bombardment of hospitals and refugee camps in Gaza.

The censorship of pro-Palestinian views and demonstrations in Latin America is also critical for imperialist governments, as they confront massive protests in the advanced capitalist countries and fear that the taking to the streets of millions worldwide will develop into a unified struggle internationally. This is precisely what needs to happen as part of building an anti-war movement led by the working class.



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