# Trudeau denounces International Court of Justice case exposing Israel's genocide in Gaza

**Our reporters**
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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has joined Washington in denouncing the case that South Africa has brought before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) charging Israel with genocide against the Palestinians.

"Our wholehearted support of the ICJ and its processes does not mean we support the premise of the case brought forward by South Africa," Trudeau told a press conference Friday.

The head of Canada's Liberal government blithely ignored the evidence that South Africa has presented to the ICJ in a meticulously researched and referenced document of more than 80 pages and a series of oral presentations before the court Thursday. Global Affairs Canada, Trudeau claimed, would soon issue a more expansive response.

Trudeau's statement is a stamp of approval for the far-right Netanyahu regime's genocidal onslaught on Gaza.

The case brought by South Africa is a devastating indictment of the mass slaughter Israel's military has inflicted on the 2.3 million people of the tiny Gaza enclave since October 7. It lays out the horrific death toll, which now exceeds 30,000, the systematic destruction of housing and social infrastructure, and the universal suffering among the territory's population almost half of whom are children and all of whom have been subjected to a brutal blockade of life's necessities.

The complaint documents in great detail the statements of genocidal intent which have come from those leading the Israeli government and its military, beginning with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself.

Trudeau's full-throated support for the slaughter and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians is at one with the actions of his and previous Canadian governments. Canadian imperialism is no less complicit in Israel's genocide than its American ally, upon whose military might Ottawa has relied for over eight decades to assert its imperialist interests around the globe.

Canada's political elite has backed Israel's brutal oppression of the Palestinians for decades, including the bloody wars waged by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in 2009 and 2014. Canada's armed forces has close ties to the IDF and Ottawa is a major military supplier for the Zionist regime. It was also one of the first countries to join the US-led coalition that mounted the provocative air strikes on Yemen's Houthis early Friday morning—a major escalation towards a regional war throughout the Middle East targeting Iran and its allies.

At home, the Liberal government has encouraged a witch-hunt of pro-Palestinian and anti-genocide protesters under the bogus guise of combatting "antisemitism," while asserting time and again that it upholds Israel's "right to defend itself" and cavalierly brushing aside any and all evidence of Israeli war crimes.

Prior to Friday, Trudeau, Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly and other cabinet ministers had sought to evade taking a public position on South Africa's case before the ICJ, prompting growing consternation within the corporate media, the official opposition Conservatives, and many within the Liberal government and caucus.

On Thursday, when asked about the government's position on the case, all that Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland could bring herself to tell reporters was that government officials were "reviewing it carefully."

After three months of non-stop savage bombardment of Gaza, the deliberate starvation of its 2.3 million inhabitants, and a chorus of incendiary and fascistic declarations from Israeli government officials justifying mass murder and ethnic cleansing—one could only ask in response how much more evidence does one need to "review"?

But in reality the government was not conducting a "review." Rather it was debating how best to publicly cast and mount its defence of Israel.

The Trudeau government's equivocation was bound up with concerns about the domestic repercussions of taking a position. Mass opposition exists among the population to Israel's genocide. The ruling elite agrees that Canada must deepen its military-strategic partnership with US imperialism to secure its "place at the table" in the imperialist redivision of the world, but tactical differences persist over how best this can be realized under conditions where working people are hostile to militarism and war.

Popular opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza has found expression in continued mass protests across the country to demand an end to the onslaught, which has been made possible through a steady supply by the US of high-powered weaponry. Protesters have become increasingly critical of the government's refusal to call for a ceasefire.

Differences within the minority Liberal government have existed since the early days of Israel's onslaught. In late October, some 30

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MPs, most of them Liberals, signed a letter calling on the Trudeau government to call for a ceasefire. On the ICJ case itself, Liberal MP Salma Zahid has urged the government to back South Africa's application and "support the process at the International Court of Justice and the tenets of international law."

The social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), on whose votes the Liberal government depends for its parliamentary majority and implementation of its agenda of war abroad and public spending austerity at home, has urged the Trudeau government to adopt an official pose of neutrality vis-à-vis the case before ICJ.

Earlier this week NDP foreign affairs critic Heath McPherson wrote to Foreign Affairs Minister Joly to ask the government "not to intervene in opposition to this case, and to support the decision of the court."

The position taken by the NDP would commit it and the government to absolutely nothing, as the case could take years to wind through the ICJ's legal process. Although the eventual decision is binding on Israel, the ICJ lacks any means to enforce it. Parties can appeal to the UN Security Council to enforce a ruling, but the US would certainly veto any resolution aimed at holding Israel to account for its genocidal onslaught.

The government's attack on the ICJ case exposing Israel's genocide will no doubt draw upon and echo the vituperous attacks issued in recent days from within the ranks of the Liberal Party and liberal circles, as well as those of the Netanyahu regime itself.

On Tuesday, Liberal MPs Anthony Housefather and Marco Mendicino released an incendiary statement that dismissed the genocide case against Israel as "baseless and unconscionable," and declared that it was up to Hamas to end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Housefather and Mendicino endorsed a *Globe and Mail* op-ed by former Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella. A Liberal appointee who has been lionized by the Canadian establishment as a liberal beacon, Abella made no attempt to rebut the legal charge of genocide. Rather she resorted to "special pleading." She justified Israel's mass slaughter and deliberate displacement of the Palestinians in Gaza as a legitimate response to what she termed Hamas' "genocidal" October 7 attack; denounced its supposed use of the civilians of Gaza as "human shields"; and invoked the Zionist national myth that justifies the dispossession of the Palestinians by invoking the Nazis' extermination of 6 million European Jews.

Similar to Abella, Irwin Cotler—a former Liberal Justice Minister and until recently the government's Special Envoy for Combatting Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance—has denounced the scrupulously documented evidence in the South African-led case as 'false charges.' A staunch Zionist and long-time advocate of war on Iran, Cotler justified Israel's continuing onslaught in Gaza in an interview on the CBC's Power & Politics. "I don't understand," he declared, "South Africa's weaponization … of international law, which not only ends up being defamatory of Israel, not only incentivizing antisemitism, but effectively undermining the whole rules-based international legal order."

The response of the Trudeau government and the Canadian political establishment to the ICJ case against Israel is a devastating self-exposure of Canadian imperialism's complicity in the Gaza genocide and the predatory character of its actions on the world stage as a whole.

It comes amid escalating efforts to criminalize opposition to the Canadian government's pro-genocide policies. On Wednesday, Trudeau met with the head of the Toronto Police and declared that it was necessary to intensify efforts to combat "antisemitism." On Thursday, Toronto Police Chief Myron Demkiw announced that a weekly pro-Palestinian overpass protest at Avenue Road would be banned, threatening those who gather with arrest. He slandered the peaceful protesters who have been confronted by pro-Israel groups as hateful and criminal, declaring in a statement, "Hate and intimidation can have no space in our city and we have been unwavering in our commitment to restore the sense of public safety, and not tolerate behaviour that crosses the line to criminal activity."

At the same time, the group of Toronto anti-genocide, pro-Palestinian activists known as the "Peace 11" continue to be pursued on criminal charges and face up to 10 years in prison over protests targeting the CEO of Indigo book stores over her financial support for members of the Israel Defence Forces. The protesters have been slandered as antisemitic, with claims of a supposed wave of anti-Jewish hate being deployed to justify a far-reaching assault on democratic rights to protest across Canada.

As the Socialist Equality Party declared in a statement defending the "Peace 11" earlier this week, "The waging of war by Canada in alliance with the US and its NATO partners is taking the form of a third world war—with fronts against Russia in Ukraine, in the Middle East, where genocide has been adopted as state policy in preparation for war against Iran, and against China in the Indo-Pacific. This imperialist redivision of the world, driven by the irreconcilable contradictions of the capitalist system, is incompatible with democratic rights at home. As the working class enters into mass struggle on a scale not seen for decades, ruling elites everywhere feel the need to turn to authoritarian forms of rule to uphold their vast wealth at the top of societies riven by monstrous levels of social inequality."

The Trudeau government's rallying behind the Netanyahu government underscores that the defence of the Palestinian people and the struggle against war cannot be advanced through appeals to the political representatives of the Canadian ruling class. Rather it requires a turn to the working class and the fight to mobilize it as an independent political force on an anti-capitalist program, by linking the opposition to genocide and war with the defence of working people's democratic and social rights, and the fight for social equality.

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