

A political farce in parliament: Canada's House of Commons passes resolution backing Israel's genocide against the Palestinians

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A political charade took place Monday night in the Canadian parliament following the presentation by the New Democratic Party (NDP) of a motion ostensibly aimed at criticizing the Israel Defence Force's (IDF) murderous onslaught on the Palestinians. Having spent days touting their intention to make clear their opposition to Israel's bloody slaughter, with some NDP MPs even raising the term "genocide," Canada's social democrats agreed to such an extensive re-write of their motion that its passage represented a declaration of support for the imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza carried out by the far-right Zionist regime.

The opposition motion introduced by the NDP's foreign affairs critic Heather McPherson was titled "Canada's actions to promote peace in the Middle East."

In its original draft, the NDP's motion called upon the Liberal government, which relies on the NDP for its majority in parliament, to "officially recognize" the state of Palestine. Furthermore, it called for the government to "suspend all trade in military goods and technology with Israel." On this basis, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and McPherson proclaimed in the days leading up to the vote that the NDP would strike a blow for Palestinian statehood and push to end Canada's complicity in the assault on Gaza.

After the motion was introduced in parliament, the NDP entered into backroom talks with the Liberals to gut its contents. By the time the Trudeau government agreed to back the motion along with the NDP, Greens, and sovereignist Bloc Quebecois to ensure its passage late Monday night by a lopsided majority, its political content bore virtually no resemblance to the original draft. Had the NDP MPs wished to be politically honest, they should have replaced the Palestinian keffiyehs they had sanctimoniously draped themselves in with IDF uniforms for the final vote.

The "official recognition" of Palestinian statehood was transformed into a vaguely worded pledge to "work with international partners to actively pursue the goal of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East, including towards the establishment of the state of Palestine as part of a two-state solution." This meaningless formula, which

the imperialist powers have repeated for the past 30 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords, could be accepted by "Genocide Joe" Biden, whose administration has supplied Israel with the bombs and other weapons to carry out its massacre.

To ensure that Canada can continue to do its part supporting Israel's military to the hilt, "suspend all trade in military goods and technology" became "cease the further authorization and transfer of arms exports to Israel." Since the Canadian government routinely excludes military equipment other than weapons from the designation "arms," this carefully chosen formulation leaves the government a free hand to continue supplying the IDF in line with its approval of more than \$28 million of exports during the first two months of the genocide. Moreover, the motion, as it is non-binding, does not in fact commit the government to any concrete action, serving as mere political window dressing as the genocide continues unimpeded.

A specific call for support to the work of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in their investigation and prosecution of Israeli war crimes, including the case brought by South Africa charging Israel with genocide, was replaced with vague pledges to support the ICJ and ICC in its work *in general*, and back the "prosecution of all crimes and violations of international law committed in the region."

Perhaps most significantly, the motion was rewritten so that it regurgitated the far-right Netanyahu government's war propaganda. A clause was inserted declaring Israel's "right to defend itself," thereby accepting the outrageous lie that the massacre of defenceless men, women and children across Gaza is an act of self-defence. Even the demand for a ceasefire was made conditional on "the release of all hostages, and Hamas must lay down its arms," i.e., surrender control over Gaza to the IDF, a proposal that even Netanyahu himself could agree to.

This did not stop NDP leader Jagmeet Singh from boasting in a lying post Monday night on Twitter/X, after the motion passed 204-117, that the NDP had forced the Trudeau government to "stop selling arms to the Israeli government,

support the ICC and ICJ, place sanctions on extremist settlers, and much more...”

The fact that the NDP not only went along with this political fraud, but positively revelled in its outcome, goes to show that their pose of “opposition” to the genocide is thoroughly dishonest. Their chief concerns were to hoodwink the mass of the population opposed to the genocide in Gaza and misdirect popular outrage back behind the trade union-backed Liberal government that the NDP has helped prop up with a formal “confidence-and-supply” agreement for the past two years.

This latest episode underscores that the fight against the Gaza genocide can only be taken forward through the fight to mobilize the working class against the entire political establishment, above all the Liberal-NDP-trade union alliance—the ruling elite’s chief mechanism for suppressing the class struggle.

Despite the resolution’s transformation into a declaration of support for Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians, it was still unanimously opposed by the opposition Conservatives led by far-right demagogue Pierre Poilievre. His deputy leader, Melissa Lantsman, played a particularly odious role in the House debate. Lantsman, a staunch Zionist and defender of Netanyahu’s war crimes, wore IDF dog tags around her neck as she accused the NDP and Liberals of supporting terrorism and promoted the lie that Hamas was “killing babies in ovens.”

The vote in Ottawa came as the Netanyahu regime doubled down on its plan for an offensive on the southern city of Rafah, where more than 1.5 million refugees are confined in desperate conditions after a months-long bombardment that has destroyed much of Gaza. The Zionist state, with the backing of the US, Canada and the European imperialist powers, is carrying out its “final solution” of the Palestinian question, just as the Nazi regime carried out the Holocaust against the Jews during World War II. In addition to its systematic destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and social infrastructure, Israel has been blocking food shipments, pushing the population to the brink of famine.

On the eve of the vote, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau held a discussion with Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz, in which the former chief of staff of the IDF made clear his government’s opposition to the motion as drafted by the NDP. “In light of the upcoming vote in Canada’s parliament calling for the unilateral recognition, particularly following the 7th of October, is counter-productive to the mutual goal of long-term regional security and stability, and would ultimately reward terrorism,” Gantz wrote on Twitter/X. “I reiterated to the PM that for the sake of the region, any unilateral actions should be avoided.”

Foreign Minister Melanie Joly returned just days before the vote from a trip through the Middle East, where she met with her counterparts in Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian Authority to shore up support for Israel and discuss the next stages in the genocide.

The debate and vote on the NDP resolution was promoted by activists leading the anti-genocide protests across Canada as a real challenge to the support by the Trudeau government for Israel. The Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East campaigned for Canadians to email their members of parliament to urge them to vote “Yes” on the motion.

Thousands of Canadians continue to turn out week after week in cities across the country to oppose the genocide and the Canadian government’s complicity in it. Peaceful demonstrators demanding an end to the killing have been viciously denounced by the entire political establishment as antisemitic. The NDP has been at the forefront of intimidating and silencing opponents of the genocide. In October, the party expelled Sarah Jama, a member of the Ontario legislative assembly, from its legislative caucus because she declared her solidarity with the Palestinian people and denounced Israel as an “apartheid state.”

The threat felt by the ruling elite from the development of mass opposition in the working class and among the youth to genocide and imperialist war played a major role in the backroom wrangling over Monday’s motion. An anonymous Liberal source told Radio-Canada that “the Liberals had argued that the political temperature needed to be lowered at a time of increasing public protests.”

Monday’s events in parliament underscore that the orientation of those organizing the anti-genocide, pro-Palestinian protests towards pressuring the Liberal-NDP-union alliance to change course is a dead-end. The fight to put an end to the genocide requires a turn not to the powers that be who are enabling mass suffering and death, but to the working class, the only social force capable of stopping war and genocide. The struggle against war and imperialist barbarism must be aimed at its root, the capitalist system. The urgent task for those seeking an end to the Gaza genocide is to build a mass anti-war movement led by the working class to fight for the socialist transformation of society.



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