

Canada's political establishment backs Israeli strike on Iran that would provoke region-wide war

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Canada's political establishment seized on the first anniversary of the Palestinian uprising against Israel's illegal occupation to declare its support for an Israeli military strike on Iran that would trigger a region-wide bloodbath. Both Liberal Defence Minister Bill Blair and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre voiced support Monday for an Israeli attack on Iran's oilfields, with the leader of the official opposition going even further and calling for the targeting of Tehran's nuclear program.

Asked whether it would be appropriate for the Zionist regime to strike Iran's oilfields, Blair told reporters Monday, "I think it's appropriate...When we talk about (Israel's) ability to defend themselves, certainly that would include missile launch sites, military installations, airfields from which these attacks are being launched, but Israel has a right to defend itself against such attacks and diminish Iran's capabilities of attacking."

Blair's remarks are in line with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who denounced Iran as a "terrorist regime" that was destabilizing the Middle East after it fired some 185 missiles at military targets in Israel October 1. Trudeau signed on to a thoroughly hypocritical G7 statement last Wednesday that gave Israel carte blanche to "defend itself" by striking Iran and portrayed Tehran as the aggressor. It said nothing about Israel's genocidal assault on the Gaza Palestinians—whether in the form of mass murder through blanket bombing, starvation or disease—or its targeted assassination of Iranian-aligned political leaders and top Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders, including in Tehran, or its savage campaign of terror against the Lebanese people.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in a recent perspective, an attack on Iran's oilfields, which Israel could only carry out with Washington's approval, would not only trigger a war between the Zionist regime and Tehran, as terrible as that would be.

[I]t would also heighten the risk that other major powers—like Russia, which has troops and naval vessels positioned in neighboring Syria, and China, which is

Iran's most important trading partner and is heavily reliant on Iranian oil supplies—would feel compelled either to intervene in the war or retaliate against the US and its allies in another part of the world.

Going even further than the Trudeau government's incendiary statements, Poilievre told an event commemorating the Israeli victims of the October 7 uprising that the Zionist regime should plan on "proactively striking Iranian nuclear sites and oil installations to defund the terrorist regime." On Tuesday, the Conservative leader was even more forthright, declaring that an Israeli strike on Iran's civilian nuclear facilities would be a "gift by the Jewish state to humanity."

Poilievre, who heads a party that is morphing into a far-right entity like its Republican counterpart in the United States, also launched into a tirade against anti-genocide protesters at the October 7 event. In addition to defunding the United Nations Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), Poilievre pledged that if he becomes Prime Minister he will withdraw all federal support to universities that "spread antisemitism and make Jews feel unsafe or uncomfortable on their campuses." Poilievre's Conservatives are far ahead in the polls, making him likely Canada's next Prime Minister.

The fact that such right-wing, pro-war filth dominates official political discourse in Canada on the war in the Middle East underscores how far removed all the establishment parties are from the sentiments of the broad masses of the population. Canada has witnessed a series of mass protests against Israel's imperialist-backed genocide over the past year, including several that mobilized tens of thousands of participants in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. Numerous student occupations of campuses, most prominently at McGill University, the University of Toronto and University of British Columbia, gave limited expression to the anger among young people over Israel's barbaric actions and the support they have received from the imperialists. To mark a year since the beginning of Israel's bloody onslaught on Gaza, students and faculty at the University of Regina walked out in protest Monday.

The widespread sympathy for the Palestinians and now the Lebanese in the face of the US-backed Israeli rampage finds no expression within the political establishment because the so-called “left” parties and trade unions have worked to suppress it. Acting as cheerleaders for the genocide, they have, with very few exceptions, embraced the Netanyahu government’s pro-war propaganda and helped demonize opponents of the genocide as antisemites.

In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 uprising, the NDP threw Sarah Jama out of its Ontario legislative caucus after the provincial parliament member published a statement accusing Israel of apartheid, a charge levelled by the United Nations and numerous international aid organizations, and declaring her solidarity with the Palestinians. The expulsion served to bolster a government-orchestrated smear campaign targeting university students and faculty, artists and workers.

The Canadian Labour Congress and all major unions systematically ignored the call of Palestinian trade unions for solidarity action by workers around the world to block shipments of military gear and other equipment to Israel. Instead, they trumpeted the propaganda about Israel having the “right” to “defend itself” as it slaughtered tens of thousands across Gaza. When student occupations and protests broke out on university campuses, the union bureaucracy refused to mobilize support among workers, even when provincial governments in Ontario and Quebec demanded and oversaw the forcible breakup of the encampments. The unions’ treachery was facilitated by the bankrupt political perspective advanced by the student protest organizers, who rejected an orientation to the working class in favour of issuing pathetic appeals to the very same politicians complicit in the genocide to change their minds.

In March, the NDP brought into parliament a motion ostensibly aimed at imposing an arms embargo on Israel, recognizing the state of Palestine, and condemning the genocide. However, Canada’s social democrats had been propping up the pro-war Trudeau-led minority Liberal government for two years by that point. They agreed to so many rewrites in backroom talks with government ministers that the final motion adopted by parliament contained a ringing endorsement of Netanyahu’s war aims, no recognition of Palestine, and no restrictions on Canadian arms shipments.

The statements issued by the NDP and CLC on October 7 were a continuation of their efforts over the past year to smother all opposition to the Gaza genocide and a wider war in the Middle East, and promote support for the Zionist regime. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh began by condemning the “horrific Hamas terror attacks in Israel in which 1200 people were killed.” This pro-Israeli war narrative willfully ignores the history of the Zionist state’s dispossession and subjugation of the Palestinian people, including its more than decade-and-a-half-long blockade of the tiny Gaza enclave. It also ignores the extensive evidence that the Netanyahu government had advance

notice of the Oct. 7 attack and chose to do nothing, as well as the well-documented fact that many of the casualties on the Israeli side were caused by the IDF’s implementation of Operation Hannibal, which calls for the killing of Israeli civilians to prevent them falling into “enemy” hands. To top it all off, Singh intoned that the NDP would “mourn with Canada’s Jewish community” and demand the “return of all hostages,” even before giving the subsequent catastrophe in Gaza a mention.

The CLC’s statement followed suit, condemning Hamas’ “terrorist attacks.” It insisted that the unions were committed to continuing to work for “the goal of peace and justice.” Given the unions’ record over the past year, nobody but the most hardened union bureaucrat actually believes this. Throughout the past year, the union bureaucracy has continued its unflinching support for the Trudeau government, as it has backed Israel’s rampage across the Middle East, massively hiked military spending, and continued to oversee Canada’s leading role in the US-NATO war on Russia, in which hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have been sacrificed as cannon fodder to advance imperialist interests.

When Singh withdrew from the NDP’s confidence-and-supply agreement with Trudeau in late August, so as to avert an electoral wipeout and better position the social democrats to capture mounting popular opposition to the establishment, CLC President Bea Bruske was quick to voice support for the Liberals’ continued rule, stressing that ending the agreement did not necessarily mean early elections.

The mobilization of workers across Canada as part of an international anti-war movement led by the working class to stop the Gaza genocide and the eruption of a war across the Middle East requires first and foremost a political break from the union/NDP/Liberal alliance. Workers must fight to fuse their escalating economic struggles, which have included a major strike wave across Canada over the past two years and large strikes in the US and Europe, with the widespread opposition to imperialist war expressed in the anti-genocide protests. This can be accomplished only on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program that fights for the abolition of the capitalist profit system, from which war and genocide arise.



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