

Far-right Zionist vigilantes target anti-genocide youth and workers, with open support of Canada's ruling class

James Clayton
5 November 2024

Faced with growing revulsion and mass opposition among workers and youth to Israel's imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza and its expanding slaughter in Lebanon, Canada's ruling class is waging a war on basic democratic rights. Employing the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state—the police, courts and intelligence agencies—and increasingly far-right vigilantes, its aim is nothing less than the criminalization and suppression of all opposition to Israel's genocide, and to Canadian imperialism's war drive.

Confirming that it is now “open season” in Canada to violently attack anti-genocide activists, Crown Prosecutors have dropped assault charges against the Zionist Lorna Bernbaum for assaulting and pulling a hijab from Hayfa Abdelkhaleq outside Ottawa City Hall on May 14, where she was demonstrating against Israel's genocide.

The Crown ruled that Abdelkhaleq's chant, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” disqualifies her from the protection of the law, because her attacker Lorna Bernbaum or a jury “could have drawn an interference that it is a call for genocide of the Jewish people,” and that therefore “anyone chants this at his or her own peril.” This is a deeply chilling decision, standing objective reality and justice on their heads.

The entirely counterfactual conflation of demands for Palestinian liberation with “genocide” is enabled by the fraudulent IHRA definition of antisemitism that the Canadian state and its institutions are now openly adopting and promoting. Virtually any criticism of the state of Israel, exposure of its systematic dispossession of the Palestinian people and demands for Palestinians' democratic and national rights are to be treated as antisemitism and liable to prosecution as hate crimes.

So alarmed is the Canadian ruling class at the persistence of mass opposition to it and Washington's war plans, of which Israel's genocide is an essential component, that such legal mechanisms alone are now felt to be insufficient. It has therefore started to deputize Zionist vigilante groups to violently intimidate and silence opposition to genocide and imperialist war, and to spy on and report dissenters to the police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).

Under the newly announced Canada Community Security Program, which was officially launched October 1, funds will now flow to vigilante groups, euphemistically termed “time-limited security personnel,” long associated with the Zionist far right and terrorism. Former Liberal public security minister Marco Mendicino has led the campaign within the government to fund these organizations.

That a former cabinet minister, tasked less than three years ago with demobilizing vigilante groups associated with the fascistic “Freedom Convoy,” is now helping steer millions in public funds to similar groups is politically significant. It signals that a rapid shift towards authoritarian rule is underway within the Canadian capitalist class.

On September 5, Toronto's main pro-Zionist organization, The United Jewish Appeal, announced the creation of the “Jewish Security Network.” Noting the importance of confronting opponents of Israel's genocide on university campuses, the UJA declared “with students throughout our community returning to school this week, we have reached a critical new phase.” The plan aims to centrally coordinate the activities of “community members”—a thinly veiled reference to various Zionist vigilante groups—with CSIS, the RCMP and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, “based on successful models from other Diaspora Jewish communities that are well advanced in taking ownership of their security.” These models all revolve around deputized vigilante groups.

One day later, anti-genocide students at the University of Toronto (UofT) organized under “U of T Occupy for Palestine” were confronted by organized Zionist thugs protected by Toronto police as a march made its way across College St. West towards Kings College Circle. The confrontation had zero to do with providing “security” to Jewish students, and everything to do with silencing political opposition to Israel's genocide.

The vigilantes included “Israel Now,” the Canadian offshoot of the Jewish Defence League, a private security firm called “J-Force” and a newly formed group with an Orwellian sounding name, the “Magen Herut (Defenders of Freedom) Canada Community Surveillance Team.”

Workers must familiarize themselves with these gangsters.

Israel Now's roots lie in the Jewish Defence League, a banned terrorist organization in the United States, that was founded by Meir Kahane, whose Kach Party was itself declared an illegal terrorist organization by the Israeli government in 1994.

Israel Now's Canadian leader Meir Weinstein has no ideological differences with the JDL, making his splinter group a JDL franchise in all but name. According to the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, Israel Now "actively promotes physical confrontations with Palestinian supporters and encourages direct harassment of individuals online and potentially offline, as well as more broadly promoting anti-Muslim hatred." The Canadian state refuses to list the JDL or Israel Now as terrorist groups, and when JDL members commit crimes in full view of the police, the police shrug.

Canada does, however, list the Kach Party and its "Kahane Chai" split-off as terrorist groups. But this proscription is not enforced. Kahane Chai supporters openly brandished its black-on-yellow flag at UofT, and uttered objectively genocidal statements in full view of police, including, "Let's make Gaza a parking lot."

Multiple uniformed members of the Magen Herut Canada Community Surveillance Team also confronted the anti-genocide students.

Magen Herut was founded by Aaron Hadida, and is composed of those who are "ideologically aligned, love Israel and the Jewish people and have some sort of policing, security or military background," according to the *Canadian Jewish News*. Magen Herut members are trained in "Krav Maga," a hand-to-hand combat technique. The slogan on their patch says, "Nothing says never again like an armed Jew. Jews can shoot."

Thus, the group's professed purpose, to "de-escalate and make sure members of the (Zionist) community are safe at all times," is a pack of lies. The group is simply a gang of fascistic thugs and former IDF soldiers in branded T-shirts. They exist to provoke demonstrations that have been peaceful and nonviolent. If such incidents serve the interests of the Israeli state, it's because Magen Herut is organizationally tied to it.

Magen Herut is the product of Herut Canada, a Zionist group originating in the Likud Party of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It is thus effectively a tool of Israeli state policy operating with an entirely free hand on Canadian university campuses, including UofT, Toronto Metropolitan and York universities. It boasts that it is expanding across the country.

Herut emerged directly out of the terrorist Irgun organization in 1948, which was famously condemned by Albert Einstein as "a political party closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties."

The deputy leader of Canada's Conservative Party opposition, Melissa Lantsman, a right-wing Zionist zealot, has

emerged, along with Mendicino, as a main advocate for Zionist vigilantism within the political establishment. She has posed proudly with members of Magen Herut, and a second vigilante groups, the "Shomrim (Guard)." Not a single Canadian politician has said a word in opposition.

The Shomrim are an international vigilante/para-police group, originating in the Hassidic community in Brooklyn. They are deputized by the police departments in New York City, Brooklyn and London, England. In some cases, the Shomrim take the law into their own hands, and have been accused of covering up crimes committed within the Jewish community.

Toronto's Shomrim group sport black uniforms and police-style badges. They drive small SUVs with markings similar to a police car, sirens and flashing lights.

The Shomrim are drawn from the same social milieu—rabidly right-wing Zionists—who have carried out violent assaults against anti-genocide demonstrations. These types include Meir Gerichter, a former security guard at Toronto's US Consulate, charged with kicking a female demonstrator in the pelvis, and Ilan Reuben Abramov, a former IDF reservist who shot at another female protester with a nail gun while shouting that "Every f**king Palestinian must die." Both of these assaults, along with several others, occurred during Palestinian protests at the Aish Hatorah synagogue in Thornhill, where the Keller Williams Real Estate firm was promoting the sale of Palestinian land for illegal Zionist settlements. These are the kinds of "community events" the Shomrim are supposed to "protect."

These and dozens of other incidents expose the entirely fraudulent nature of Liberal and Ontario Conservative government claims that the deputizing of gangs of Zionist thugs by the police and the state has anything to do with "community safety." Rather, their purpose is the creation of a fascistic proxy force which will permit the Canadian state to strike out violently at its political critics without suffering the exposure and outrage which would ensue from open acts of state violence and intimidation.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact