Oppose the Canadian authorities' arrest and persecution of anti-genocide activist Yves Engler!

James Clayton
23 February 2025

Montreal-based author and activist Yves Engler, a prominent opponent of Canadian militarism and of Israel's genocide in Gaza, has been arrested and imprisoned in a malicious, politically motivated prosecution on trumped-up charges of harassment and obstruction of justice.

The case against Engler has been instigated by fascistic, Zionist elements, who enjoy the full support of the Canadian state—from the trade union-backed Liberal government and the provincial governments of all political stripes to the police and security forces.

The Socialist Equality Party unequivocally denounces Engler's prosecution and demands the dropping of all the charges against him, which are of an entirely concocted and vindictive character. The campaign against him is part of the Canadian ruling elite's persecution of opponents of imperialist war and the ongoing genocide against the Palestinians. This has included mass arrests by the police, the violent intimidation of demonstrators and the smearing of protesters as antisemites.

On Wednesday, February 19, Engler posted on his website that he had been notified by Montreal police of a complaint against him filed by Dahlia Kurtz, a Zionist activist in Toronto, with the assistance of the Spiegel Sohmer law firm and one of its principals, Neil Oberman, the Conservative federal candidate in Mount Royal. Oberman is infamous for his denunciations of anti-genocide student encampments and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese.

Engler is a radical journalist and author who has skillfully exposed some of Canadian imperialism's crimes. A "left" Canadian nationalist critic of Ottawa's military-strategic partnership with Washington, he has written on Canadian imperialism's close relationship with Ukrainian fascists, the devastation of communities in Latin America and Africa through the destructive activities of Canadian mining companies, and Canada's aggressive role within NATO.

Engler explained that the complaint against him consisted of the fact that he "had described Kurtz as a 'genocide' supporter and 'fascist' on Twitter. Guilty as charged. On dozens of occasions, I've responded to Kurtz' racist, violent anti-Palestinian posts on X."

Engler, and thousands of others, have responded to posts such as these:

Engler continued:

> "On July 5, 2024, Kurtz quote tweeted me with the statement: Hello, @EnglerYves. I'm advising you in this one message only that you are harassing me. You're threatening and you're making me afraid for my safety. You must stop this harassment — and communication with me. Stop now."
>
> She quote-tweeted a message I posted six days earlier noting "Racist Dahlia supports killing Palestinian children. 20,000 is not enough she wants even more Palestinian blood spilled.'
>
> "As an X user noted immediately and Kurtz surely knows, the platform has a mechanism for anyone who no longer wants to hear from another user. They can block that user. Kurtz has chosen not to block me but instead pursue criminal charges."

In April 2024, Engler also captured video of himself questioning Oberman, who was part of a group seeking a court injunction against a peaceful anti-genocide student encampment on the grounds of McGill University. Engler asked him "if he had a problem with 15,000 Palestinian children killed." Oberman angrily walked away.

The police demanded that Engler desist from discussing the case, a demand that Engler rightly refused, stating, "that is a flagrant violation of my freedom of expression."

Engler rapidly wrote a blog post about his ordeal, with a link to a campaign site where supporters could write in to the Montreal Police to protest the charges against him. By Thursday morning, 2,500 letters had been submitted. As of Friday evening, more than 7,000 letters had been sent.

This campaign outraged the Montreal Police, who informed Engler the next day that he faced new charges—of "harassing" the police!

Engler wrote,

> Today a new investigator called to say investigator Crivello feels threatened by my writing about the charges levelled against me. The Montreal police will be charging me with intimidation, harassment, harassing communication and 'entrave' (interference) towards Crivello.
>
> The police investigator also announced that they will be holding me overnight out of fear that I may 'recidive' (relapse). In other words, I might once again write about the absurd charges levelled against me. Guilty as charged.

Engler reported to police on time at 9AM Friday. His father later informed his supporters via social media that "the prosecutors refused

© World Socialist Web Site

to free him [on bail] unless he would agree not to speak publicly about the case including naming directly or indirectly the influencer who filed the complaint against him."

Engler is being held over the weekend, pending a further hearing on Monday Feb 24.

The anti-democratic attack on Engler is an ominous and dangerous escalation in an ongoing ruling-class campaign to silence and smear all opponents of imperialist war and Israel's genocide against the Palestinians. Working people everywhere must strenuously oppose it. If the attack on Engler is allowed to succeed, the state will be able to silence its critics using legal harassment and intimidation. If the proposed gag-order on Engler is allowed to stand, anyone so targeted will be unable to mount a public campaign in their own defence.

The attack on Engler comes in the context of a rapid expansion of censorship and state-led persecution of opponents of war and genocide around the world. In the United States, fascist President Donald Trump has called for the deportation of protesters against the Gaza genocide and is working to establish a presidential dictatorship to crush social opposition to war and the enrichment of the financial oligarchy for which he speaks. In Germany, Albanese was blocked from addressing two meetings in Berlin and Munich last week, and was only able to hold an event condemning Israel's genocide against the Palestinians at a venue surrounded by riot police. Ukraine's Zelensky regime, which survives only thanks to the military and financial support it receives from Washington, Berlin, and Ottawa, has been holding the socialist opponent of the US-NATO war on Russia, Bogdan Syrotiuk, in a high-security prison for ten months for the "crime" of calling on Russian and Ukrainian workers to unite on a socialist and internationalist program against war.

Virtually no protest has been forthcoming from within Canada's political establishment over Engler's arrest. This is a case where silence denotes consent. Spearheaded by the Trudeau Liberal government, all levels of government and political parties have endorsed an onslaught on opponents of war and genocide since the US-provoked Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and Israel's genocide in Gaza.

This campaign against opponents of imperialism began with the ruling class's attempt to silence all criticisms of Canada's war against Russia in Ukraine. When the International Youth and Students for Social Equality campaigned to hold Toronto's first anti-war meeting in June 2023, leading Canadian politicians, including Ontario Labour Minister Monte McNaughton, Toronto City Councillor Brad Bradford and former New Brunswick Education Minister Dominic Cardy demanded that the Toronto Public Library rescind its rental agreement and the meeting be shut down. The IYSSE mounted a vigorous, international campaign to defend its right to meet and speak in public, attracting support from workers around the world, including in Ukraine and Russia, and from Pink Floyd founder Roger Waters. Because of this powerful defence campaign, the meeting went ahead.

Canada's political establishment showed its attitude to democratic rights in September 2023, when, with Prime Minister Trudeau in the lead, all MPs rose to give a standing ovation to Waffen-SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka, a Ukrainian Nazi implicated in the Holocaust and other monstrous crimes.

After Israel's onslaught on Gaza began, the Trudeau government led the charge to label any criticism of the Zionist state as "antisemitic," a course joined by all of the major parties. Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Marit Stiles expelled MPP Sarah Jama from the NDP's parliamentary caucus after Jama, basing herself on findings by the United Nations, called Israel an "apartheid state" and condemned the occupation of Palestinian land in October 2023. Jama was denounced by Ontario Premier Doug Ford from the floor of the Legislature as an "antisemite" and the Tory majority in the provincial parliament voted to censure her, preventing her from speaking on any issue in the chamber. The NDP leadership connived to block Jama running as a candidate for the NDP in this Thursday's provincial election.

Jama's sidelining served as the starting gun for a sweeping attack on protests across the country. Members of a protest group in Toronto, known as the "Peace 11," were detained by the police in early morning raids and subjected to criminal prosecution after smearing red paint on Indigo Books stores to protest the chain's owner, the Zionist multi-millionaire Heather Reisman, using her considerable wealth to support Israel Defence Forces veterans. When students occupied university campuses in the spring of 2024 to protest the ongoing genocide, university authorities, egged on by provincial governments, deployed the police in Toronto and Montreal to violently disperse the camps.

The ruthless suppression of anti-war and anti-genocide protesters has been accompanied by an expansion of arbitrary state powers against workers fighting to defend their jobs, and secure real wage and benefit increases. During the last six months of 2024, the federal Liberal government arrogated draconian new powers, based on a cooked-up reinterpretation of the Canada Labour Code, to rob four separate groups of workers of their right to strike and bargain collectively. Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon asserted his right to unilaterally order an end to the disputes, including a month-long strike by 55,000 postal workers, without even so much as a parliamentary vote.

Under these conditions, the defence of Yves Engler's free speech rights is an urgent political task for all workers. It must be undertaken as part of the construction of a mass movement of the working class in Canada and internationally against state repression and imperialist war, and the deepening attacks on the working class with which these developments go hand in hand. For such a movement to prevail, it will need to fight for a socialist program to put an end to war and capitalist austerity, and secure democratic rights for all.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site