

Jewish reporter assaulted and arrested for anti-genocide protest at Ontario NDP election night event

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The assault of a journalist protesting Israel's genocide against the Palestinians during the February 27 election night rally of the Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDp) has exposed, once again, the class character and political bankruptcy of Canada's social democrats.

As party leader Marit Stiles began her speech at downtown Toronto's Great Hall on Queen St. West, Zachary Ruiter, an independent journalist and longtime NDP supporter, held up a sign on which was written, "Marit's Legacy is Genocide." Ruiter shouted this slogan several times—referencing the party's complicity in the Gaza genocide and the repression of the Palestinian people—before being tackled by no less than six Ontario Provincial Police officers, who sat on him and caused multiple bruises.

The crowd, composed of about 100 party functionaries and trade union bureaucrats, responded to the protest with shouts of "No!" and a chorus of boos, before trying to drown out Ruiter with tub-thumping chants of "NDP! NDP!"

The WSWS spoke to Ruiter, who described the brutal nature of his arrest. "Initially, they were still being rough on me. Even when they took me into another room, they were still being rough. They still held me down, and I said, 'I'm not resisting. I'm peacefully protesting. My body is limp. Don't touch me.'" The violent arrest left Ruiter shaken. He said police gave the excuse that they were "doing their job" to "protect Marit Stiles."

The fact that the Ontario NDP requires police thugs to silence peaceful protesters at its events exposes its fundamental hostility to the working class it claims to represent. Police take-downs of political dissidents are associated with repressive, antidemocratic regimes, but they are increasingly a feature of Canadian bourgeois politics as the ruling class abandons democratic forms of rule.

In one of the latest examples, left-wing radical journalist and political activist Yves Engler was arrested by police last month in Montreal at the instigation of fascistic, Zionist elements. Held in jail for several days, Engler faces trumped up charges of harassment and obstruction of justice, for denouncing a Zionist activist on her X feed and subsequently publishing details of the criminal case against him.

In Ruiter's case, he was originally charged with "mischief, resisting arrest and trespass," but the charges have been reduced to "trespass" only after the intervention of Ruiter's lawyer, who pointed out to police that the reporter was exercising his constitutional right to free speech, as supposedly guaranteed under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Explaining his action, Ruiter declared, "I'm actually more concerned with the children of Palestine and their families and how

callous we are to accept any political calculus in which we don't speak out against genocide..."

Ruiter, who is Jewish, emphasized that his action drew on his principled convictions as a grandson of Holocaust survivors. "My ancestors were murdered in the concentration camps. That's who I'm speaking for. We are taught 'Never Again,' but for some reason there's an exception for Zionists? It's making Jews unsafe everywhere."

Ruiter bitterly noted the adaptation of the NDP to the witch hunt against former Hamilton Centre MPP Sarah Jama, who was expelled from the NDP caucus before being censured in the Ontario legislature in November 2023, after making perfunctory remarks in solidarity with the Palestinians. Jama, who was barred from standing as an NDP candidate in the February 27 provincial election in Ontario, won almost 15 percent of the vote standing as an independent.

"I've had conversations with my neighbors around the political calculus of why we should not hold Marit Stiles accountable for firing Sarah Jama for being outspoken on Palestine or for calling for a ceasefire," he said. "The argument is that it would be a losing electoral strategy to keep Sarah Jama and support her right to freedom of expression. She (Stiles) lost badly. The argument that firing Sarah Jama was some sort of strategic choice because Stiles needed to defeat Doug Ford is completely, completely false."

Ruiter had attempted to launch his own candidacy in Stiles' riding of Davenport, but faced a campaign of threats and intimidation from Zionist thugs.

"I was told that because the nomination papers are publicly accessible that they were going to dox everyone who signed my papers," he explained. "And at that point I felt that because I had not warned the people who signed my papers that this was a possibility, that it would have been irresponsible of me to submitted the papers without fully informed consent. That's why I didn't submit them."

Ruiter remarked that he wanted to advance a political alternative that finds no political expression in the NDP. "I want to show my neighbors that if you want to defeat Doug Ford, you have to first defeat Marit Stiles. You can't bring a wet noodle to a sword fight and think you're going to win," he commented.

The NDP's program in last month's election took the form of a series of pathetic, populist gestures cribbed from the political right and which would do nothing to ameliorate the exploitation faced by working people. "Stiles wanted to give a family of four up to \$122 per month to put food on the table and money in their pocket. So, if you do the math on that, \$122 per month divided by four for a family of

four is \$30.50 per family member divided by 31 days in a month is less than a dollar a day. You can't even buy a small bag of chips for that," Ruiter explained.

The reaction of the working class to these appeals was a collapse in support for the NDP, which garnered 1.9 million votes in 2018, but only 931,000 votes in 2025.

The collapse of the NDP's political base was reflected at Stiles' election night rally. "A staffer had asked everyone to sort of push in to create the illusion that there were more people there than there were actually," Ruiter noted. "There were people on the stage and then the people in the audience. I'd say there was under a hundred people."

The bitter experience of Ruiter and many others like him who have had their heads cracked while trying to push the NDP to the left by means of moral appeals to the party leadership must be assimilated by the working class.

The problem is not merely, or even primarily, Stiles or her subjective qualities. The problem with the NDP has an objective, class character. Workers must understand that the NDP does not represent the working class, but rather the trade union bureaucracy, and a small layer of the upper middle class who trade in identity politics to advance their own social position under capitalism. The political role of the NDP is to manage and contain workers' struggles on behalf of Canadian capitalism.

The political collapse of the NDP and its capitulation to the political right is not a phenomenon particular to Ontario or even Canada, but arises out of the crisis of world capitalism and imperialism. Its political trajectory follows closely that of all of the other bankrupt social democratic parties in the imperialist countries, which have all lined up behind their capitalist ruling elites as they prepare for a global war to redivide the world.

The political bankruptcy of the NDP was exposed long before the expulsion of Sarah Jama from the ONDP caucus. It finds clear expression in the March 2022 "confidence and supply" agreement between the federal NDP and Justin Trudeau's Liberals, under which the NDP pledged to keep the government in power, and the NDP's full-throated support for the Canadian ruling class in its reactionary trade war with the Trump administration.

The NDP's propping up a Liberal government which is waging an imperialist war against Russia via its Ukrainian proxies and backing Israel's genocide in Gaza reflects not some imagined estrangement of the NDP from its supposed 'principles,' but rather its real principles and the real interests of the social forces it represents—the union bureaucracy and the upper middle class.

The confidence-and-supply agreement was only "ripped up" in September by NDP leader Jagmeet Singh out of crude political calculations, as it became clear that continued close association with Trudeau was dragging down the party's electoral prospects in the next federal election.

The interests of the union apparatus and upper middle class purveyors of identity politics who make up the base of the NDP revolve around securing a place for themselves in the capitalist system. For the bureaucracy, this requires the suppression of workers' struggles, not their advancement. For the upper middle class, this requires social 'reforms' which insulate their marginal economic position from global capital, against whom they cannot compete.

The greatest fear of these layers is not Doug Ford. It is the class struggle.

As the working class has come into struggle for improved wages and working conditions, the bureaucracy has sold out every single strike,

imposing ruthless concessions and real-wage pay cuts. With the active support of the Canadian Labour Congress, the National Executive of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers unilaterally ordered Canada Post workers to end their four-week strike and submit to the Trudeau government's patently illegal back-to-work order in the face of mass rank-and-file sentiment for defiance.

Now the CUPW bureaucrats are conniving with management and the federal government in their plans to "Amazonify" the post office. When 55,000 Ontario education workers struck in 2022 in defiance of a vicious provincial Tory anti-strike law, provoking a movement for a general strike, the unions rushed to shut it down, throwing Ford a desperately needed lifeline. For her services to the union bureaucracy and the ruling class, Laura Walton—the head of the CUPE affiliated Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU)—was rewarded with the presidency of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Likewise, when students and youth launched a militant mass movement of opposition to Israel's genocide, the response of the NDP was to denounce principled opponents of Zionism and imperialism as "antisemites." The response of the trade unions was to cover up active hostility to the movement with phony, left sounding rhetoric.

The real, objective interests of workers in Ontario and across the country find no expression in official political life. As Canadian imperialism embarks on a trade war with its closest economic partner, the United States, the ruling class—with the help of the unions and the NDP—is whipping up a nationalist fervour to divide Canadian workers from their Mexican and American class brothers and sisters. Workers must not fall for these nationalist appeals.

No moral appeal or political protest can push the NDP and the trade union bureaucracy to the left, because their commitment to the capitalist system and their fealty to the Canadian bourgeoisie is driving them to the right.

Workers, students and youth must make an irrevocable political and organizational break with the NDP. The Socialist Equality Party, the Canadian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is the political home of all workers who want to oppose genocide and imperialist war and struggle for a socialist society.



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