

# Québec Solidaire's new co-leader Ruba Ghazal promotes the fraud of "inclusive" nationalism

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20 March 2025

Ruba Ghazal was elected without opposition as Québec Solidaire's "female co-leader" at the party's national convention last November. Alongside 2012 Quebec student strike leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, Ghazal now leads the pro-independence, pseudo-left formation, as it makes a marked shift towards anti-immigrant chauvinism and economic nationalism in response to the capitalist crisis and Trump's return to the White House.

The ruling class and the corporate media welcomed Ghazal's election and have been full of praise for her. For example, the *Journal de Montréal*, a right-wing nationalist tabloid that promotes xenophobia, described her as one of "Quebec's most promising politicians," capable of "breathing new life into Québec Solidaire." During an appearance on the prime-time CBC program "Tout le monde en parle," Ghazal was described as a "formidable politician, never radical."

Quebec Premier François Legault has also praised Ghazal, calling her a "model of integration in Quebec," a reference to her Palestinian origins. "She arrived in Quebec, learned French and speaks it perfectly," he enthused. "She's involved in politics, she loves Quebec culture."

Coming from the chauvinistic, ultra-conservative Legault, these remarks are highly revealing. The ruling class knows that behind her "moderate left" image, Ghazal is a fervent Quebec nationalist who poses no threat to the established capitalist order. During her more than six years as the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for the Montreal riding of Mercier, Ghazal has proven herself a loyal defender of the interests of Quebec's big-business elite.

Ghazal's selection as QS co-leader exemplifies the sharp rightward turn taken by this pseudo-left party of the privileged middle class. Over the past decade, QS has put aside its pretensions to be an oppositional "party of the street," which were used to chloroform workers and young people, to more openly assume its true role—reviving Quebec nationalism and the reactionary Quebec independence project alongside the Parti Québécois (PQ) and the sovereignist movement as a whole.

Ghazal comes from a family of Palestinian refugees and spent part of her youth in refugee camps in Lebanon. She immigrated to Canada at the age of 10. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the Université de Montréal's prestigious HEC business school, a master's degree in environmental studies and a certificate in occupational health and safety. Although she describes herself as a "girl from the shop floor," Ghazal actually worked as a health, safety and environment manager for the American multinational Owens-Illinois. She subsequently entered politics, as a protégé of Amir Khadir, Québec Solidaire's first-ever MNA, winning election to his old seat in 2018 when he retired from the party's senior ranks.

In recent years, Ghazal has been in the forefront the QS leadership's "pragmatic turn," that is the repudiation of its previous "protest" image in

order to project itself as a "responsible" party, one that is "*de gouvernement*" or capable of administering the Quebec capitalist state. The few limited social reform measures QS proposes here and there, such as free school meals, are just window dressing. And even if these timid measures were ever implemented, they would do nothing to meaningfully address the vast social problems caused by decades of capitalist austerity.

Ghazal and Québec Solidaire's increased promotion of Quebec independence is a key element in the party's "pragmatic turn." Québec Solidaire's PQ partners have long criticized it for supposedly placing too much emphasis on its "left-wing" "social project" to the detriment of defending "Quebec's interests" and promoting independence, prompting QS to respond with a further shift to the right.

Ghazal was the main public face of Québec Solidaire's 2024 tour to promote Quebec independence among university and CEGEP (technical and pre-university) students. According to her own observations, young people associate—and rightly so—Quebec nationalism with a discourse of "identity and conservatism." Ghazal's role is to change this perception, to cover up the true nature and function of nationalism and separatism: an instrument of class domination and an incubator for the most reactionary political forces.

## The fraudulent conception of "inclusive and progressive" nationalism

Ghazal declared, for example, that "nationalism does not belong to the right. It needs to be reclaimed by the left in the most inclusive way. I always say an inclusive, unifying and open nationalism." She added demagogically: "The right-wing wind is blowing hard. While our opponents are fighting over who will be toughest on immigrants or who will be most accommodating to the very rich, we on the left are fighting for the people, we're fighting for Quebec."

This is a monumental fraud.

The nation-state, historically obsolete, is at the heart of the current crisis of the capitalist system.

The contradiction between the growth of an ever more integrated world economy, underpinned by globalized production processes, and the division of the world into rival capitalist nation-states is driving the imperialist powers, including Canada, towards commercial/trade war and military conflict.

It was this contradiction that lay at the root of the two world wars of the previous century, and today risks giving rise to a third. Indeed, the contours of such a catastrophe can already be perceived in the US-NATO-instigated war against Russia in Eastern Europe, Washington's all-sided

economic and military-strategic offensive against China, and the US-Israeli drive to create a “new Middle East” through a genocidal assault on the Palestinians and war against Iran and its allies.

The globalization of production is a historically progressive process that increases labor productivity and unites workers across national borders. Under the democratic control of the working class, globalization would enable the rational planning and use of the Earth’s resources to reorganize society on a socialist and egalitarian basis, responding to the needs of all. Under capitalism, however, globalization is used by the major transnational corporations to move production anywhere in the world in search of ever cheaper labor to exploit; it also engenders a fierce struggle between different national capitalist cliques for access to resources and markets.

In other words, the system of nation-states, in which private profit accumulation is rooted, makes it impossible to coordinate global production in order to satisfy human needs. This has been dramatically demonstrated by the inability of the capitalist ruling class to offer any scientific, coordinated response to the climate crisis threatening humanity, even though global warming, like the COVID-19 pandemic, ignores national borders.

Nationalism is an ideological tool of the ruling class to mobilize the working class behind their economic struggles and wars against their capitalist rivals. The myth promoted by QS of a “progressive” nationalism is designed solely to better conceal the real class relations in Quebec, keep Quebec workers tied to the Quebec bourgeoisie, and turn them against their class brothers and sisters in the rest of Canada and the world.

This fabrication goes hand in hand with the idea of a “peaceful” Quebec having nothing in common with the United States, where Trump is pushing to establish a fascist dictatorship. Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, for example, wrote on X that “we must cherish the Quebec difference. Despite all our problems, we’re fine here in Quebec. Despite all our disagreements, we are still able to talk to each other, to imagine a future together.”

In reality, QS has already signaled that it will make common cause with the other bourgeois parties and the union bureaucracy to protect the class interests of the ruling elite in the face of Trump’s trade war. This involves supporting retaliatory tariff measures against the the US, while advancing a “Quebec First” agenda that includes potentially striking deals with Washington at the expense of the Quebec elite’s rivals within the Canadian federal state.

This economic war, which QS has already embarked on with its proposal to retaliate against Trump by raising the price of Quebec’s electricity exports to the US, will be waged on the backs of the working class through increased worker exploitation—austerity, the privatization of public services, job cuts and price hikes.

### **QS, nationalism and the rise of far-right chauvinism**

As with the rise to power of the fascist Donald Trump in the United States and the Canadian media’s promotion of Pierre Poilievre, his Conservatives and their “Canada First” program, the recent growth of nationalism in Quebec is directly linked to the rise of anti-immigrant chauvinism and the far right. Québec Solidaire has been tasked with blurring this reality.

Legault’s Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) and the PQ are at the forefront of a campaign of Quebec chauvinist incitement in which the entire ruling elite, federalist and sovereignist (pro-Quebec independence), is complicit. This has included the adoption of a series of discriminatory laws to promote “secularism” and the primacy of the French language,

such as Bills 21 and 96; agitation for a massive reduction in the number of immigrants; the denunciation of minorities as an “existential threat” to the “Quebec nation” and so forth.

Despite this far-right agitation and agenda, QS consistently defends the PQ and CAQ against all charges of “racism” and xenophobia. In fact, QS has tacitly supported the attack on religious and cultural minorities by always insisting that the “debate” on secularism is legitimate and necessary. This position is summed up by Ghazal when she declares that “saying we want fewer [immigrants] isn’t the problem. It’s when you say, ‘We want fewer of them because they’re the cause of the housing crisis.’ That can be offensive.”

### **Quebec independence: a reactionary project for a new capitalist state in North America**

Equally fraudulent is QS’s attempt to present independence as a “progressive” project for the “Quebec people.” In reality, powerful sections of the French-speaking Quebec ruling class, supported by layers of the middle class, advocate the creation of a new capitalist state in North America, whose borders would serve as a new means of dividing the working class.

The Quebec bourgeoisie, assisted by the trade union bureaucracy, and with the tacit backing of Canadian capital, used Quebec *indépendantiste* nationalism to politically subjugate a militant working class upsurge in the Quebec of the 1960s and 70s that developed as part of a powerful offensive of the international working class. Like the May-June 1968 general strike in France, this movement had an immense emancipatory potential, but the unions channeled the social opposition of the working class behind the ruling elite and the pro-independence Parti Québécois.

The program of Quebec independence is now largely discredited, above all due to the brutal anti-worker austerity measures the PQ imposed during the multiple occasions it held office over the past half-century. During the same period, the unprecedented integration of the global economy and internationalization of socioeconomic life has undermined the objective foundations for nationalism.

While in any earlier period the PQ-led sovereignist movement tried to win popular support by associating, however insincerely, independence with social reform, over the past two decades it has based its calls for Quebec’s secession from Canada ever more explicitly on ethnic-national exclusivism and anti-immigrant chauvinism. At the same time, with increasing frankness it has spelled out that a capitalist République du Québec would mean the accelerated dismantling of public services and Quebec’s increased participation in the crimes of imperialism, as a member of NATO, NORAD and other predatory alliances.

As opposition grows in the working class internationally to Trump’s drive towards dictatorship, and the embrace of authoritarianism and world war by the ruling elites in all the imperialist states, Ghazal and Québec Solidaire are desperately trying to rebrand this political trap for the working class. As a form of extreme nationalism, the promotion of Quebec independence is aimed at dividing Quebec workers and isolating them from their class brothers and sisters elsewhere in Canada and internationally, in order to prevent the emergence of a unified working-class offensive against capitalism.

### **QS as a defender of Canadian imperialism**

More often than not, Québec Solidaire maintains a complicit silence on the crimes of Canadian imperialism abroad. Whenever it takes a clear stand, it does so, like the other parties in the National Assembly, in support of these crimes, under the false pretext that Canada is a “force for peace” in the world and is promoting “human rights.” This was the case when Ottawa joined Washington’s wars in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria to impose its hegemony in the vital, resource-rich Middle East. Ghazal herself has joined the US-Canadian imperialist campaign of aggression against Iran by organizing for the National Assembly to adopt a resolution that demonizes Iran’s bourgeois-clerical regime in the name of “women’s rights.”

QS is totally silent on the federal state’s massive military spending to advance the predatory interests of Canadian imperialism. This includes billions of dollars in military aid to the neo-Nazi-infested Ukrainian regime, which acts as a proxy force for Washington and NATO in the war against Russia. The aim of this war is to subjugate Russia in order to loot its resources and better position the western powers for a possible war against China.

QS has also joined the ruling elite in supporting Israel’s genocidal assault on the Gaza Palestinians. When a QS MNA dared to denounce the complicity of the Quebec political establishment in the Gaza genocide, Ghazal and the QS leadership told him to shut up and demanded a public apology.

### **An independent political movement of the working class must be built**

QS is following the same path as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and Die Linke in Germany, parties that QS calls its “cousins.” Despite their “left” pretensions, when in government these parties have imposed savage austerity on the working class, attacked migrants fleeing war and advanced the interests of European imperialism, including by staunchly supporting the war on Russia and European rearmament. Were Québec Solidaire to come to office, it would be no less ruthless in attacking the working class than its Liberal, PQ and CAQ predecessors.

The working class must reject the national-chauvinist agitation of the Quebec political establishment, just as workers across Canada must reject Canadian nationalism, the political-ideological weapon of the federalist sections of the financial and business elite. Workers in Quebec and across Canada face the same fundamental issues as workers in the US, Europe and internationally: attacks on wages, living conditions and public services; the elimination of democratic rights; the rise of far-right forces; the threat of global nuclear war; pandemics and global warming.

The working class must prepare for the fierce class struggles on the horizon by building an independent political movement that will unite workers across national borders in the fight for workers’ power and socialism. This is the program for which the Socialist Equality Party, as the Canadian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is fighting.



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