

Anti-genocide activist and radical journalist Yves Engler convicted on trumped up “harassment” charges by Canadian court

James Clayton
26 January 2026

In a flagrantly anti-democratic decision, a Quebec court has found the radical journalist and anti-genocide activist Yves Engler guilty of harassment of a police officer and obstruction of justice after he sought to defend himself from a right-wing witch hunt, spearheaded by far-right Zionists and supported by the state and corporate media.

Engler was targeted for prosecution due to his vocal opposition to Israel's imperialist-backed genocide of the Gaza Palestinians and the complicity of Canada's Liberal government and political establishment.

Justice Karine Giguère found Engler guilty last Friday of obstructing a peace officer, obstruction of justice and harassment under the Criminal Code for having encouraged his supporters to send emails protesting his impending February 2025 arrest on “hate crime” charges by the Montreal Police.

The original “hate” charge was levelled against Engler in response to a criminal complaint made by the far-right Zionist provocateur Dahlia Kurtz, with the assistance of the Spiegel Sohmer law firm and one of its principals, the prominent Conservative Neil Oberman. In social media posts, Engler had challenged Kurtz over her enthusiastic endorsement of the genocide and anti-Palestinian racism.

So lacking was Kurtz's complaint of any legal foundation, the Crown was compelled last July to drop the harassment charge that it had filed against Engler based on it.

However, in what is clearly a malicious, politically-motivated prosecution, the authorities decided to double down on the charges they had brought against Engler for having urged his supporters to call on the police to drop the discredited harassment/“hate” crime charge.

When Engler was first arrested in February 2025, the police demanded, as a bail condition, that he be prohibited from discussing the charges against him on social media. To have this restrictive condition—designed to prevent him from defending himself from Kurtz's bogus allegations—dropped, the anti-genocide and anti-war activist went to prison for

five days.

The court has yet to sentence Engler, but the penalties he faces are potentially severe and grossly punitive. Under the Criminal Code those convicted of either obstruction of justice or harassment can be jailed for up to 10 years.

Engler and his lawyer, John Philpot, have said that they will appeal Friday's verdict. The Crown has yet to indicate what sentence it will ask for when Justice Giguère holds a sentencing hearing March 4. Philpot, for his part, has said that he will argue for Engler to be sentenced to time served.

The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally condemns the kangaroo court conviction of Engler and calls on workers, students and all those who defend democratic rights to come to his defence and demand the immediate vacating of his criminal convictions. Engler is the target of a state-led campaign of harassment and intimidation, because of his vocal opposition to Israel's genocide and exposure of the crimes of Canadian imperialism.

Engler's persecution began on February 18, 2025, when Montreal Police Hate Crimes Unit Detective Francesca Anna Crivello called Engler to inform him that he would be arrested the following day for alleged online “harassment” of Kurtz. Such “harassment” consisted of political opposition to Israel's genocide of the Palestinians, expressed by Engler in comments on Kurtz's many hateful, racist anti-Palestinian X posts.

Engler's email campaign, launched on actionnetwork.org in response to Detective Crivello's notification of his impending arrest, encouraged supporters to send an email to Crivello headlined, “Drop charges against author Yves Engler,” with the explanatory note stating, “I'm being charged for responding to anti-Palestinian hate on X.” The body of the email message contained the statement “The arrest of author Yves Engler for social media posts opposing Israel's genocide is an abuse of state power. The charges against the father of two young children should be immediately withdrawn.” The letter addressed the detective

as “Dear.” The notion that there was anything threatening in its content is patently absurd.

The campaign, to which more than 4,360 people eventually responded, produced more than 1,600 emails in Detective Crivello’s inbox within its first few hours. Engler’s social media campaign in support produced more than 263,000 views within 15 hours. Both of these facts are clear indications of mass support for the defence of democratic rights within the working class.

It was the mass character of this support which clearly horrified Justice Giguère. In her judgment, she admonished Engler for having “obstructed” Detective Crivello.” “The accused knew or should have anticipated,” asserted Justice Giguère, “that the response to his request to write would be very large.”

The court accepted the claim, entirely concocted by the police, that Detective Crivello was “intimidated” and felt “targeted,” because her name was associated with the campaign. It also accepted the no less absurd claim that she was prevented from doing her job because her email inbox was full. A minor clerical inconvenience for a state official in an organization with an annual budget of \$824 million was inflated into criminal “obstruction.”

On the preposterous charge that Engler’s email campaign constituted “harassment,” Giguère ruled that “Even if they believe they are in the right, an accused cannot take justice into their own hands by making harassing communications to make their point.”

The court’s assertion that a police officer, an armed agent of the capitalist state, could be “intimidated” by a full email inbox or that an email defense campaign “directly attacks the power of police to lay charges” is a risible fraud. The police are empowered in bourgeois law to use lethal violence to defend the capitalist state, which wages imperialist wars and attacks the living conditions and rights of the working class, public opinion or opposition be damned.

The conflation of an email protest campaign directed at state officials with acts of vigilantism—“taking justice into their own hands” in the words of the court—sends an ominous signal.

Engler rightly noted, in comments with the leader of the Quebec Green Party Alex Tyrell, “Friday’s ruling is a blow for everyone who might disagree with a decision by the government or its representatives. The email campaign was not unlike petitions sent to all levels of government, reporters or corporate officials, which are generally lawful.”

Further, Engler explained, “The verdict also drew a distinction between email campaigns directed at police and those aimed at other public figures. It effectively creates a special category of protection for police officers, insulating them from coordinated public pressure. The ruling grants

police broad discretion to define criticism of their actions as criminal interference and to define communication/pressure as ‘obstructing’ justice.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in 2024, there are “deep concerns within Canada’s national-security apparatus that unprecedented social inequality and growing economic insecurity combined with climate and technological change will fuel political and social upheavals that threaten bourgeois rule.”

These upheavals, and the state’s repressive response, are well underway. Canada’s ruling class united around a campaign of repression and slander against the hundreds of thousands across the country who participated in protests against the Gaza genocide. The spurious charge of “antisemitism” was used by state authorities, from the federal Liberal government on down, to justify police violence against protesters, mass arrests, and the censoring of meetings and artistic and cultural events.

These efforts enjoy the support of the entire Canadian ruling class and its political representatives, including the trade union-sponsored NDP. It was the NDP that threw Ontario MPP Sarah Jama out of its caucus because she described Israel as an “apartheid state” and opposed the genocide. And it was the NDP that blocked Engler’s bid to run for party leader, undoubtedly because the party leadership saw him as an anti-genocide and anti-Ukraine war candidate who could mobilize popular support.

The defence of Engler’s democratic rights is a class question. The Canadian ruling class looks upon the quickening pace of the class struggle with horror, and is arming itself with the same repressive measures that are being adopted in the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Australia and elsewhere. The working class must respond with a powerful political mobilization in defence of democratic rights, including the right to strike and the right to speak out without fear of reprisals against the many crimes of Canadian imperialism, including its complicity in the Gaza genocide.



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