Canada’s Liberal government backs imperialist regime change in Iran

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Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand emphasized the federal Liberal government’s full-throated support for imperialist-imposed regime change in Iran at the Munich Security Conference earlier this month.

“We will not open diplomatic relationships with Iran unless there is a regime change. Period,” she told reporters from the *Globe and Mail*. Earlier the same day, Anand announced sanctions against seven individuals she claimed were “linked to Iranian state bodies responsible for intimidation, violence and transnational repression targeting Iranian dissidents and human-rights defenders.”

In remarks dripping with hypocrisy, Anand demanded that “the repressive Iranian regime must curtail the consistent and illegal violation of Iranian human rights, including by respecting international law and international humanitarian law.”

As the Trump administration massed its naval and air forces in the Middle East to prepare a potentially devastating assault on Iran, 60 heads of state and hundreds of high-ranking foreign affairs and defence officials gathered in Munich to navigate what conference organizers termed a new era of “wrecking ball politics” and “sweeping destruction.” With a US aircraft carrier battle group looming in the Arabian Sea, a second en route and over 120 fighter jets poised to launch weeks of air strikes, Anand cynically refused to say whether Canada would support an unprovoked and illegal US military attack on Iran.

In the week since the conference concluded, American military forces in the Middle East have reached their highest levels since the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq—a war that was justified on the basis of fabricated claims Saddam Hussein had “weapons of mass destruction.” This time around, the impending war is even more criminal, with Washington not even bothering to offer a pretext for their attacking an historically oppressed country. The would-be dictator Trump is set to launch a massive onslaught that could claim the lives of hundreds of thousands and threaten the lives of millions across the region should the conflict spread.

Notable among the guests invited to participate in the Munich Security Conference was Reza Pahlavi, the son of the last Shah of Iran, the bloody US-backed dictator who was overthrown by the 1979 revolution. Pahlavi, who has lived in exile in the US for the past 48 years, has offered himself as the figurehead of a new Iranian government that would take power through US military assault and establish an imperialist puppet regime. While at the conference, he pleaded for military intervention and increased enforcement of sanctions and offered up Iranian energy reserves to US and European imperialism. “It is time,” he proclaimed, “to end the Islamic Republic.”

Anand’s declaration of Canada’s support for imperialist-orchestrated regime change in Iran coincided with the “global day of action” called by the exile Iranian Crown Prince for February 14. Right-wing opponents of the Iranian regime demonstrated in Munich, Los Angeles and Toronto, where the pre-1979 Iranian flag with the monarchy’s emblem and pro-monarchy chants were widespread. Demonstrators denounced the regime’s bloody crackdown on protests that began in December of last year, which were initially motivated by the economic hardships induced by the US-led sanctions but quickly became dominated by right-wing, pro-imperialist forces. The imperialist powers seized on the bourgeois-clerical regime’s violent crackdown against the protests to escalate preparations for war as part of American imperialism’s relentless drive to secure dominance of the Middle East. The demonstration in Toronto explicitly called for the Canadian government to recognize Pahlavi as the leader of Iran’s “democratic transition.” Draped in the flag of the Iranian monarchy, demonstrators, many of them wearing Make America Great Again caps, marched down Yonge Street chanting “King Reza Pahlavi!”

Canadian imperialism’s support for the US-Israeli rampage across the Middle East

Anand’s declaration of support for regime change in Iran is just the latest instance of the Liberal government, now headed by the former central banker Mark Carney, offering its full support to US imperialism in its drive to assert unbridled hegemony over the Middle East, the world’s most important oil-exporting region.

Last June, it backed the illegal 12-day US-Israeli war on Iran. The air strikes killed more than a thousand Iranians, most of them civilians. When Israel, with Washington’s military-logistical support, attacked Iran, in flagrant violation of international law, Ottawa adopted a posture of complicit silence. When Trump ordered the US to directly enter the conflict by launching a massive and unprovoked assault on Iran’s nuclear energy facilities, the Carney government welcomed the US military intervention and demanded Tehran stand down.

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US and other western intelligence services and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) conceded that there was no evidence Iran was seeking to develop a nuclear weapon. This did not stop Carney from supporting the US-Israeli assault on Iran as legitimate and necessary to "alleviate" the "grave threat to international security" ostensibly posed by Iran's nuclear energy program. In the wake of this nakedly illegal act of aggression, Carney called for a return to "negotiations" and a "diplomatic solution." The Trump administration and its Israeli ally have used talk of "diplomatic" solutions to cover their aggression against Iran over recent years, including the institution of punishing economic sanctions aimed at crashing the Iranian economy and provoking regime change.

Successive Liberal governments, under Carney and his predecessor Justin Trudeau, have likewise offered their steadfast political support to Israel throughout its genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza. US imperialism's regional proxy has pursued a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing and extermination against the Palestinians in Gaza, instituted a regime of brutal repression and illegal occupation in the West Bank, and lashed out violently against Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Despite crocodile tears about Israeli violations of "international law," Canada under Carney and Justin Trudeau before him has consistently supported Israel's "right to defend itself," i.e. to commit any crime against the perceived enemies of US imperialism and its allies, no matter the horrific toll on the civilian population.

Canada's Liberal government has funnelled millions of dollars of weaponry to facilitate Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza since 2023, despite its repeated claims to have stopped arms exports. Working with provincial governments of every political stripe, it has systematically suppressed opposition to the genocide at home. From Trudeau on down, government ministers denounced students and workers protesting Israel's mass slaughter and Canada's complicity in it as "antisemites" and gave a free hand to far-right Zionist organizations to intimidate activists. At the UN, Canada has repeatedly voted with the US to block resolutions condemning Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land and rampant violation of Palestinian rights.

Coming from a government that has backed Israel to the hilt as it has committed the gravest war crimes of this century, Anand's cynical denunciations of Iran for violating "human rights" and "international humanitarian law" are absurd. While she and Carney castigate Iran, they are courting Saudi Arabia and other absolutist Gulf States for investment.

The Carney government's loyal support of US imperialism's efforts to force regime change in Iran and dominate the resource-rich and geostrategically critical Middle East, underscore the true nature of its conflict with the Trump administration. Canada is a junior imperialist power which has historically pursued its economic and political interests on the world stage through alliances with the dominant imperialist partner—first as part of the British Empire and subsequently as a close ally of US imperialism. What Carney termed in Davos the "rupture" in international relations is the final breakdown of the post-war world order upon which the Canada-US alliance rested. In its stead, a new redivision of the world among the imperialists is well underway, with Canadian imperialism seeking to retain some form of collaboration with its erstwhile US ally, while at the same time asserting more forcefully its own predatory interests.

While pushing back against Trump's threats to Canadian "sovereignty" and desperately seeking economic leverage against the US through diversified international trade, Canada's imperialist ruling elite hopes to secure its share of the spoils in the Middle East by lining up behind Washington's war on Iran.

Carney welcomed the US military assault on Venezuela at the beginning of the year and the kidnapping of the country's president, Nicolás Maduro, with the claim that this evisceration of international law, ordered by the would-be dictator Trump, opened the door to "democracy." If Ottawa didn't go on record as explicitly supporting Washington's criminal actions, it was because Trump brazenly touted them as an important step in realizing the Donroe Doctrine. It asserts that US imperialism, as the "pre-eminent" power in the Americas, has the right to seize resources, strategic territories and assets from any state in the Western Hemisphere, including its traditional Canadian imperialist junior partners.

The fall of the Islamic Republic and the opening up of Iran's economy and natural resources to foreign capital would offer immense profit and strategic opportunities for Canadian capital. The denial of Iranian oil and natural gas to China, a major strategic objective of US imperialism in its war against Iran, would benefit Canada's energy producers, both by spiking prices in the short-term and opening up Iran's resources for them to exploit in the years ahead.

Above all, the Carney government and the Canadian ruling elite are desperately seeking a rapprochement with Washington that allows them to retain their dominance over Canada's vast land, natural resources and working class. Their goal is to be admitted as a partner within the walls of "Fortress North America," rather than absorbed as the 51st state.

Pledging tens of billions in increased military spending and corresponding brutal austerity, the rapid development of military production and "secure" supply chains for critical minerals and other natural resources, the Carney government hopes to secure Ottawa's place at the imperialism high-table—alongside the US and/or European powers—in the conflicts to come. The only social force capable of preventing this is the working class in Canada and around the world, fighting on the basis of a socialist program.

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