

US and Canada ban Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, declaring it a “terrorist entity”

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The US and Canadian governments announced a coordinated action this week to sanction and ban the activities of the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, declaring it to be a “terrorist entity.” The ban, which was accompanied by a hysterical campaign from Canada’s political establishment and corporate media, follow similar moves against the organization in the Netherlands, Germany and Israel.

Founded in Vancouver, British Columbia in 2011, Samidoun advocates on behalf of Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons and has participated in the organization of protests against the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the ongoing genocide in Gaza. It was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in Canada in 2021. It denies having any material or organizational ties to any groups listed as terrorist by the US, Canada or the European Union.

The far-right leader of the Conservative opposition Pierre Poilievre had been pressing for the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to place Samidoun on the terrorist list. He railed against the organization for allegedly orchestrating “violent and horrific” protests, and denounced Foreign Minister Melanie Joly in the House of Commons for “pandering to Hamas” due to her failure to condemn protests involving Samidoun.

The listing of Samidoun as a terrorist entity in Canada will result in its bank accounts being frozen, restrict members’ ability to travel internationally, and make it illegal for anyone to provide them with property or financial donations. The US sanctions will have a similar effect on the organization’s operations there.

“Canada remains committed to working with our key partners and allies, like the United States, to counter terrorist organizations and their fundraisers,” Canadian

Minister of Public Safety Dominic LeBlanc said in announcing the sanctions. “Today’s joint action with the U.S. sends a strong message that our two nations will not tolerate this type of activity and will do everything in our power to ensure robust measures are in place to address terrorist financing.”

Public Safety Canada claims Samidoun has “close links with and advances the interests” of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization which has been declared a terrorist organization by the US, Canada and the other imperialist powers, justifying its proscription.

“Organizations like Samidoun masquerade as charitable actors that claim to provide humanitarian support to those in need, yet in reality divert funds for much-needed assistance to support terrorist groups,” Acting Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Bradley T. Smith said in accounting for the action. “The United States, together with Canada and our like-minded partners, will continue to disrupt those who seek to finance the PFLP, Hamas, and other terrorist organizations.”

A statement from the US Department of the Treasury accused Samidoun of being a “sham charity” which provides funds to the PFLP and announced the sanctioning of Khaled Barakat, a former senior official for the PFLP who currently lives in Canada with his wife, Charlotte Kates, the international coordinator for Samidoun.

Kates was arrested in Vancouver on April 29 following a speech in which she led the crowd in a chant of “Long live October 7th” and advocated for the delisting of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and other groups as terrorist organizations. At a Samidoun organized a protest on the anniversary of October 7 this year, a Canadian flag

was burned while attendees chanted “death to Canada, death to the United States and death to Israel.”

In a typical media response, right-wing columnist Brian Lilly complained in the *Toronto Sun* that Samidoun has been active in anti-genocide protests in Toronto, “often unfurling their banner of an image of an AK-47 painted with the Palestinian flag on the butt of the rifle and bullets flying out the end of the barrel.”

The Canadian government, establishment parties, and their media mouthpieces should be the last ones allowed to wag the finger at anyone and complain about their “violence.” They have supported the transfer of tens of millions of dollars of weaponry to Israel since the genocide began, and cheered on the genocidal Netanyahu regime as it has massacred tens of thousands of men, women, and children with high-powered US-supplied bombs.

Trudeau, Poilievre and Co. have reveled in the assassinations of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh while in Tehran on an official visit and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Moreover, Ottawa has been a major player in almost all US-led wars of aggression over the past three decades, including the ongoing bloodbath in Ukraine against Russia. In the context of such levels of barbarism and lawlessness, it is anything but surprising that protesters are prepared to chant “death to Canada” or “death to America.”

Barakat, a Palestinian-Canadian citizen who was born in Jerusalem, and Kates, a Canadian citizen, have been the target of a campaign by the Zionist organization B’nai B’rith Canada demanding that the government of Canada deport them from the country for their advocacy on behalf of imprisoned Palestinians.

Tens of thousands of Canadians have turned out to protests across the country to demand that the trade union-backed Liberal government press for a ceasefire in Gaza and stop arming the genocidal Israeli regime. Despite the popular outrage and repeated moral appeals, the political establishment has maintained its support for Israel, even as the onslaught has claimed more than 40,000 lives, according to official statistics, and likely over 200,000 based on estimates. The onslaught has expanded throughout the Middle East with Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and the targeted assassination of the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah.

A motion put forward in parliament by the NDP in March ostensibly aimed at imposing an arms embargo on Israel, recognizing the state of Palestine, and condemning the genocide was rewritten to such a degree in backroom

talks with the Liberals that it resulted in the passage instead of an endorsement of Netanyahu’s war aims, no recognition of Palestine and no restriction on arms.

Anyone in the political establishment who has taken a stand against the genocide has been subjected to vicious attack. Ontario MPP Sarah Jama was kicked out of the NDP caucus and censured by the Tory controlled parliament after putting out a statement shortly after Hamas’ October 7, 2023, uprising which expressed sympathy for the Palestinian people. The president of CUPE Ontario, Fred Hahn, was subject to a vicious smear campaign and demands for his resignation after he shared a meme criticizing Israel’s indiscriminate bombing of Gaza.

Protests have repeatedly been smeared as antisemitic by the political establishment on the flimsiest bases. Last year, eleven residents of Toronto were subjected to early morning raids of their homes in relation to the posting of an Indigo book store’s windows over CEO Heather Reisman’s support for the Israel Defence Forces and her complicity in the genocide, an action which the police claimed was “hate-motivated.” And the Toronto police have established a secret unit aimed at suppressing and undermining the protests in the country’s largest city in coordination with the Trudeau government, RCMP and CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service).

The coordinated crackdown by the Biden and Trudeau administrations on Samidoun is a component of the ongoing effort in both countries to suppress opposition to the Gaza genocide and the wave of pro-Palestinian protests which has continued for more than a year, including solidarity encampments which swept college campuses in the Spring. This anti-democratic attack is the spearhead of a broader assault on the democratic and social rights of the working class, whose right to strike has virtually been abolished, at least when workers are in a position of strength, and violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the US Constitution. It must be opposed by workers and youth in Canada and the United States as part of their struggle to construct an international anti-war movement led by the working class to halt the Gaza genocide and the developing third world war.



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