

Trudeau smears Montreal anti-NATO protest as “antisemitic”

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and other leading Canadian and Quebec politicians seized on an anti-NATO/pro-Palestine protest held last Friday in Montreal to amplify their efforts to smear all those opposing the Gaza genocide, and the crimes of Canadian imperialism and its allies around the world, as “antisemites.”

The demonstration, organized by Divest for Palestine and the anarchist Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles (CLAC), was held late Friday afternoon to coincide with the 70th annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, which the Canadian government hosted in Montreal from November 22-25. Early Friday evening, clashes erupted between police and a small subset of the protesters, resulting in acts of petty vandalism and three arrests.

Without providing any evidence, the Canadian political establishment and media immediately presented the events that unfolded on Friday night as an “antisemitic riot.” Trudeau railed on X against “appalling” scenes in Montreal. “Acts of antisemitism, intimidation, and violence must be condemned wherever we see them,” he declared.

Trudeau added menacingly that the RCMP was in touch with the local police, noting that “there must be consequences and rioters held accountable.”

Speaking from the Halifax International Security Forum, where she was plotting with Ottawa’s imperialist allies as how to escalate the NATO-instigated war against Russia and otherwise advance their common predatory global ambitions, Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly said that “violence, hate and antisemitism” have “no place on our streets.” Defense Minister Bill Blair, who was also in attendance at the Forum, claimed, “This was anarchy. It was an engagement in violence and hatred on display in the city of Montreal.” Similarly, Quebec’s right-wing ethno-chauvinist premier, CAQ leader François Legault, spoke of witnessing “violent and hateful scenes” and “attacks specifically targeting the Jewish community.”

This hysteria is of a piece with the draconian crackdown sponsored by the entire Canadian political establishment against anti-genocide protesters since October 7, 2023. Peaceful protesters criticizing Canada’s complicity in the systematic massacring of Palestinian men, women, and children have

faced police violence and spying, been smeared as “antisemites,” and been targeted for dismissal from their jobs and other acts of intimidation by far-right Zionist vigilantes with government support. Ontario New Democratic Party legislator Sarah Jama, one of the few political figures to speak out in support of the Palestinians, was unceremoniously dumped from her party caucus and censured in the provincial legislature—an effective gagging order that prevents her from speaking on any issue in the Ontario parliament until she “apologizes” for calling Israel an “apartheid state.”

As with the previous attacks on pro-Palestinian protesters, no evidence exists for the incendiary allegations made by politicians and the mainstream media. According to Montreal police, the riot consisted of a couple of burned cars and a few broken windows. The police were unable to confirm whether one of the burned cars was lit on fire by protesters, or accidentally by the police itself. In several cases, protesters accused the police of starting the violence.

According to the police themselves, out of some 800 participants, only around 20-40 were suspected of having participated in illegal acts, and they neither saw nor had reported to them any hate crimes or antisemitic acts. The only charges brought against the three arrested protesters were for obstructing police work and assaulting a police officer. Even Montreal Police Chief Fady Dagher felt compelled to state Saturday, “I can’t make the correlation with yesterday’s acts, whether they were antisemitic or not.”

A statement released by Divest for Palestine on Sunday emphatically rejected the accusations of antisemitism as unfounded and explained that the protest “falls under the legitimate expression of collective anger in the face of political indifference at the heart of a colonial genocide.”

The baseless accusation of antisemitism promoted by Trudeau and the political establishment is rich coming from a ruling class that is providing massive military and financial support to Ukraine’s government and state, which are rife with the political descendants of the Ukrainian fascist and Nazi accomplice Stepan Bandera.

For three-quarters of a century, the Canadian state has provided political and financial support to Canada’s far-right Ukrainian nationalist movement, which glorifies its part in

fighting on the side of Nazi Germany during World War II, which included the involvement of the Banderite Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the Holocaust.

Just over a year ago, Canada's parliamentarians and military top brass, other dignitaries, and the visiting Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, rose in unison to give a standing ovation to Yaroslav Hunka—a Ukrainian member of Adolf Hitler's Waffen-SS, which played a leading role in the extermination of Europe's Jews. Earlier this month, the Trudeau government announced it would not release the names of some 900 Nazi war criminals who found refuge in Canada after the Second World War thanks to the intervention of the Canadian state for fear it would damage the Ukrainian war effort.

These Nazis were only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of OUN Nazi accomplices and their sympathizers to whom Canada gave refuge and helped whitewash their crimes so as to advance Ottawa's Cold War objectives at home and abroad. This link finds expression today in the person of Trudeau's deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland, who has a life-long association with the far-right, government-sponsored Ukrainian Canadian Congress and is the leading cabinet war-hawk. Freeland's maternal grandfather, Mikhaïlo Chomiak, was the editor of *Krakivski Visti*, a Ukrainian-language antisemitic and pro-Nazi paper during World War II. To this day, Freeland and her colleagues in government have neither denounced nor renounced this heritage.

Canadian imperialism, like its American and European allies, are more than willing to collaborate with genuine antisemites and fascists when the issue at stake is advancing their predatory economic and geopolitical ambitions. This is not only because such alliances allow them to deploy bloody violence against external enemies in order to lay their hands on new sources of raw materials, markets, and spheres of influence, but because they help fashion the tools of repression at home to be deployed against the working class and young people determined to oppose imperialist barbarism.

In this regard, the fact that the political establishment responded with such outrage to a relatively small protest is undoubtedly connected with the fact that more than 50,000 students, mainly at universities and colleges in and around Montreal, had participated in a nationwide student strike against the genocide in Gaza on Thursday and Friday of the same week. Moreover, the demonstration took place as 55,000 postal workers entered their second week on strike in a class battle that pits workers fighting for well-funded public services, job protections, and decent working conditions against the ruling elite's drive to subordinate all of society's resources to the waging of wars around the world and the transfer of wealth to the super-rich.

Trudeau and the rest of the political establishment know full well that their program of war and austerity has no popular

support and therefore respond to all expressions of mass anger with fear, demonization and repression. The situation is similar in all of the major imperialist powers. In the United States, protests by tens of thousands of college students across the country have been labelled "antisemitic" and a climate of fear akin to the McCarthy era created on campuses, with anyone speaking out against the Gaza genocide threatened with expulsion or termination. In Germany, academics and other professionals are blacklisted, artists hounded, and protesters threatened with state violence. In alliance with the fascistic Alternative for Germany, which describes the Nazi dictatorship as "bird poop" in over a thousand years of successful German history, the German parliament recently adopted an "antisemitism" resolution defending the Israeli state and all but prohibiting any criticism of its barbaric acts.

Canada's rapidly rightward moving bourgeoisie perceives growing opposition to war and social inequality within the working class as an existential threat. A growing section of the ruling elite considers Trudeau's Liberals as too weak, accommodating, and ineffective in dealing with the "leftist" threat.

The far-right leader of the official opposition Conservatives, Pierre Poilievre, who is a Trump emulator and likely to become Canada's next Prime Minister, responded to Friday's events by demanding the deportation of immigrants joining "antisemitic" protests, and the adoption of new laws to deal more harshly with "violent" protests. Referring to Trudeau's attendance with his children at a Taylor Swift concert while Friday's protest was unfolding, Poilievre insisted that Trudeau should have said, "I'm going to put my friendship bracelets down, get my national security officials on the line, and discuss how we can respond to this chaos."

Employing Trump-type far-right demagoguery, Poilievre continued, "It is another confirmation of how everything is broken after nine years of Trudeau's radical woke agenda."



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