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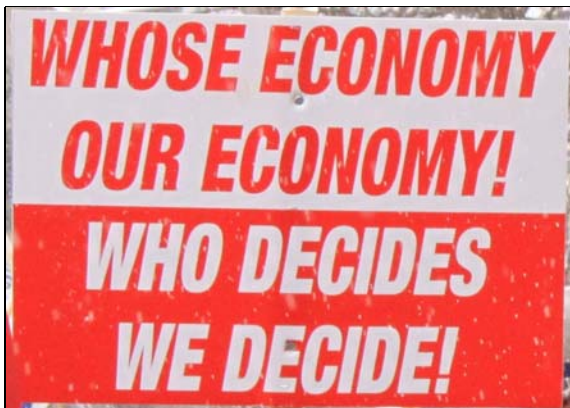
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Trudeau Government's Refusal to Introduce New Direction for the Economy

Fall Economic Statement Sets a Path to Even Greater Indebtedness, Impoverishment and Insecurity

- *K.C. Adams* -

The Liberal cartel party in power presented a Fall Economic Statement to Parliament on November 30, delivered by Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. The Statement contains a continuation of programs such as the commercial rent support program for businesses and a boost to 75 per cent for the government wage subsidy to employers for their workers with an additional subsidy of up to 100 per cent of minimum wages to businesses that hire young workers. The government claims these payments to companies help workers gain employment but does not present any evidence.



The combined price of what the government calls short-term stimulus programs over three years is estimated at around \$110 billion. The projected federal spending will push the annual budget deficit to \$381.6 billion in 2021 with additional accumulated deficits totalling \$270 billion by 2026. The spending includes an additional \$100 billion for which no details were given.

With the projected annual deficits the federal debt will soon exceed \$1 trillion along with another trillion dollars in Quebec and provincial debt. The accumulated deficits have come with unprecedented government borrowing from global institutional moneylenders. Government borrowing from private moneylenders is a particularly onerous pay-the-rich practice that the Canadian people should demand be abolished. It should be replaced with the state borrowing

from itself. The enormous debt to the global oligarchs, who receive compound interest on the borrowed amount, has already sparked threats in the mass media and imperialist think tanks of severe anti-social cutbacks to make the people pay once the pandemic is defeated.

Child Care, Pharmacare and Long-Term Care Homes

Two social programs the Liberal government was rumoured to be introducing failed to materialize in the official statement: an early learning and child care system (or federal universal day care) and pharmacare. It should be noted that a policy objective for universal child care has been associated with the Liberal Party since its "red book" of election promises in 1993. In lieu of a national child care strategy, Freeland appeared to ingratiate herself to Quebec by claiming that the federal government would use the Quebec child care system as a model. Nothing is said about the fact that this system, said to be universal, is mired in a lack of spaces for all children who qualify. Furthermore, the child care workers in Quebec have been protesting their inadequate working conditions and wages for a very long time. This is typical of the government whose statements, conclusions and decisions are never discussed by providing evidence to corroborate what is claimed.



Regarding the desperate situation facing workers and residents of Canada's long-term care homes, CUPE National President Mark Hancock points out that the government's offer in the Statement of \$1 billion for the provinces to boost infection control and PPE stock for those facilities is effectively a subsidy to those in control, mostly private companies. "This is another piecemeal announcement that underlines the disappointing lack of progress the federal government has made on its promise to enact national standards for the sector," said Hancock.

In fact, this federal health money with "strings attached" is in opposition to the 1867 Constitution, which declares health care a provincial responsibility. The Bloc Québécois and some provincial cartel party leaders view the "strings attached" to the \$1 billion long-term care money as a provocation. Instead they want a general increase in the federal Canada Health Transfer so that it reaches at least 33 per cent of total health care spending for the country. The federal government's decades-long anti-social offensive of austerity with less spending on health care in proportion to the population and needs of Canadians has reduced the Health Transfer from the original 50 per cent of total spending to around 22 per cent.

Economic Statement Does Not Reveal the Extent of the Crisis and Need for a New Direction

The federal government describes its Statement as a "snapshot" of the economy but nowhere does it even attempt to reveal and bring forward for discussion or analysis the actual conditions facing Canadians and the necessity to stop paying the rich and increase investments in social programs.

For working people the situation remains tenuous both for those working and those unemployed with large numbers struggling to make ends meet. Many Canadians who are working face difficulties with the pandemic at work and in their daily lives. Governments and employers refuse to mobilize the working class to take collective action to defend themselves and society from the pandemic and defeat it. This refusal has made it particularly difficult for front line workers in health care, education, mass transit, and agriculture -- especially the thousands of migrant

agricultural workers, and in those industries where workers work in close proximity to one another.



Statistics Canada reports the numbers of unemployed in September remained high with 1.8 million workers looking for work and not finding any and an additional 580,000 unemployed workers waiting for a sign of some improvement in their prospects to sell their capacity to work before actively looking for work. The number of workers who have dropped out of the workforce for various reasons also continues to be elevated especially among women.

StatCan reports low wage workers, those earning less than \$16 per hour, have been particularly hard hit during this crisis and continue to face difficulties in finding work. StatCan says employment among youth aged 15 to 24 remains further from recovery than other major age groups. Female youth employment in September was still 10.4 per cent below February 2020 levels and male youth 10.2 per cent below.

Eight million nine hundred thousand Canadians received a stipend of \$500 per week from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which began last spring and ended on October 3. The stipend is now over but difficulties remain for many Canadians in acquiring a living including those considered self-employed. StatCan says, "The relatively slow recovery of self-employment -- and the number of hours worked by self-employed Canadians -- is reflected in the profile of those receiving COVID-19 support payments. In September, one in five (21.8 per cent) CERB recipients were either currently self-employed or had been self-employed in the last 12 months. The proportion of CERB recipients living in a household experiencing difficulty meeting its necessary expenses increased to 42.0 per cent, up 4.3 percentage points from August."

Homelessness, poverty and food insecurity have all increased during the crisis with little easing of the conditions to be seen on the horizon. This is in addition to the personal tragedies of the many who have directly suffered or died from the pandemic health crisis and the parallel opioid epidemic.



The government Statement says private business investment has collapsed significantly. Reduced demand for goods and services has left some businesses with more capacity than needed, it says. Private business investment intentions for the fiscal year have plunged from \$180 billion to \$140 billion. This amount is \$60 billion below the private investment peak of \$200 billion just prior to the collapse of oil prices in 2014.

The economic crisis has plunged the economy into a decline as did the crises in 2008 and 2014. After the pandemic is over, the economy is expected to stagnate and grow minimally, around 1.4 per cent a year, with that small growth coming almost exclusively from the stimulus immigration and the increased demand and additional work-time and value the new arrivals bring.

Within this situation, private business demand for government pay-the-rich programs and investments in police powers and the war economy to serve U.S. imperialism's striving for world

hegemony are sucking public funds away from social programs and human-centred investment. This can be seen in the pay-the-rich public-private partnerships to build infrastructure in what the ruling elite characterize as "green" projects, and for militarized transportation corridors to facilitate the extraction of strategic minerals from Canada to feed the U.S. military.

Ruling Elite Cannot Be Allowed to Sideline Discussion on a New Direction for the Economy

The cartel parties in government are united in their opposition to finding a new direction for the economy based on a program to stop paying the rich, increase investments in social programs and to develop and build an extensive network of human-centred enterprises with the explicit aim to serve the people, economy and society and not the private interests of the oligarchy. The current direction of throwing money at the rich and their enterprises has proven in practice to be a failure.



The ruling elite in governments, mass media and think tanks are obsessed with defending the status quo of class privilege and the immense wealth of the few. Instead of pouring public money into the private hands of the rich, many ask why not begin a discussion at least on a new direction to serve the people. The working class is ready for something different than this crisis-ridden economy. Some even in the small business sector would be willing to discuss a new direction where their talents and energy could be channelled into something constructive and stable both for themselves and the economy and people, a direction that would tackle and solve many of the

problems plaguing the country and its economy and social and natural environment.

Not many would disagree that the country needs universal early learning centres, better and truly free and universal health care and education for all, housing and other social programs and services. Why not pour the billions now being spent on pay-the-rich schemes and the U.S. war economy into building human-centred enterprises in strategic locations throughout the big cities and in all the smaller and medium-sized cities? Those human-centred enterprises accountable to the people would be dedicated to solving social and natural problems, achieving self-reliance in the economy and meeting the needs of all and their security.

Human-centred enterprises could be built in campus-style settings with early learning to grade twelve facilities, long-term care centres, post-secondary colleges and universities, recreation and cultural facilities for all ages with centralized cafeterias with acclaimed chefs knowledgeable in all styles and types of food. The campus could be connected with app-assisted mass transit and distribution coordinated with nearby residents. Children, workers and cooked food could be safely transported each day from the campus to housing in the area in an organized way.

The campuses could be associated with human-centred manufacturing enterprises accountable to the people to produce essential and other commodities in a self-reliant way that pours the new value workers produce back into the local regions and economy and trades with others Canada-wide and globally for mutual benefit, friendship and development.

Problems have to be taken up as they present themselves and extensive discussion engaged in to build public opinion for a new direction that solves problems. The cartel parties and the rich who do not want their class privilege and status quo disturbed should not be allowed to sideline the people's discussion of a new direction and the necessary practical steps to be taken.

The key problem that presently exists is political namely the institutional and constitutional disempowerment of the people. *Out with the Old, in with the New!* should become a slogan. The current outmoded political system dominated by the cartel parties and imperialist media block discussion and any movement towards democratic renewal. Working people have to confront this problem of disempowerment in an organized fashion with a clear conscience and determined actions with analysis that build public opinion towards constitutional and institutional renewal that favours the people. Out with the Old! March towards the New with confidence in your capacity to meet the challenges!



Canadians should denounce and reject with contempt the mind numbing, discussion destroying, diversionary statements, and empty platitudes and policy objectives of the Trudeau government and others in the cartel parties. They are a disservice to the people and a block to opening a path forward. A modern society deserves and demands better.

The people themselves must shape the modern world consciously. The watchword is to learn warfare through warfare and for this to happen a path must be opened to discussion and actions with analysis that reject all that is moribund, decrepit and corrupt. Enough of these recurring economic crises, mounting social and natural problems and a political block on the people from taking action in their own interest. Working people must step up their efforts to challenge the rich oligarchs and their servile vassals by holding high their claims on what belongs to them by right and refusing to accept anything less.

Democratic renewal is the order of the day. Empower yourself now! Problems can be solved; the modern socialized economy can be made to serve the people without crises and war! The social and natural environment can be humanized!

The time is now to organize, discuss and fight for a new direction for the economy and politics! It can be done!

(Photos: TML)

Canada's Foreign Policy

What Canada Is Up To at the UN

- Steve Rutchinski and Philip Fernandez -

Canada is up to no good at the United Nations where it is very active in promoting imperialist definitions of rights and cajoling countries to adopt those definitions of rights under threat of retaliation by imperialist financial, military and political institutions. Canada's aim is to push through a restructuring in the field of international relations in a manner which serves U.S. imperialist interests.

The appointment of the tried and true point man of the Anglo-Canadian state, Bob Rae, as Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations is for purposes of achieving these nefarious aims. Undaunted by its failure to be elected to the Security Council, Canada's announcement of Rae's appointment was accompanied with much ado about his being a champion of multilateralism,

human rights and peace. A briefing note from the Prime Minister's Office described Rae as a fine choice to "continue to engage our international partners and promote the Canadian values of peace, freedom, democracy, and human rights as we move forward in a time of global uncertainty."



Deeds, however, provide clarity as to what Canada stands for when it comes to "values of peace, freedom, democracy, and human rights." Canada's foreign policy is based on the domination of the world by the western imperialist system of states, led by Anglo-American imperialism and using NATO as the enforcer. The policy is not new, based as it is on a narcissistic resuscitation of the self-serving doctrine called "middlepowerhood" promoted as the guide to Canadian diplomacy in the service of U.S. imperialism in the Cold War 1940s.[1]

Rae fits right in as a trusted champion of Anglo-American imperialism. His track record on matters which continue to be of concern reveals very well that there is nothing remotely progressive about what Canada is up to.



In 2004, Rae supported Canada's involvement, together with France, in the U.S.-led coup in Haiti and overthrow of the popular democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide government. With true gangster logic, Rae said it was Aristide's "ineffectiveness and gross corruption" that led to the coup that overthrew his government, not the illegal intervention by the U.S., Canada and France.

Rae is an ardent Zionist and an unabashed supporter of Israel's abuse of its responsibilities as an occupying power consistently standing against the Palestinian people's rights. He served on the steering committee of the "Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism" convened in 2009, which sought to undermine the rights of the Palestinian people by criminalizing and silencing those who oppose Israeli crimes

against the Palestinians by branding them anti-Semites.

It is noteworthy that regarding Gaza and the Occupied Territories, which have been turned into the

world's largest open-air prison and where crimes against the peace and against humanity are committed every day by the Zionist state of Israel, Canada and its UN Ambassador have nothing to say! Nay more, this year Canada is actively opposing the investigation of Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. This is Canada's "human rights" agenda in action!

In 2010, Rae allied with the Harper government to support an increased military deployment in Afghanistan. He opposed a scheduled Canadian troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and called for Harper to "see this through."

In 2011, Rae was the Liberal Party's Foreign Affairs Critic in the Parliament. He called for regime change in Libya and supported Canada's participation in the savage NATO bombing which destroyed that country and unleashed the violence, instability and insecurity that has since spread southward to Mali and across the Sahel.

When Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez died in March 2013, Rae tweeted his "condolences, and hopes for democratic future." When President Nicolás Maduro was elected by the people of Venezuela in 2013, Rae called for Harper to impose tougher measures against Venezuela. As recently as January 2020, he added, "Chávez and Maduro have abused their power terribly, impoverished their people and created the greatest humanitarian and refugee crisis in modern Latin American history. The romanticization of their regime and ideology is a disgrace."

Canada is using "middlepowerhood" and a long-standing foreign policy in favour of multilateralism to protect Anglo-American imperialist interests, under the leadership of the United States and backed by NATO "hard power," cobbling together "coalitions of the willing" as necessary.[2]

In a CTV interview in July, Rae put it this way: "The basic fundamentals of how we approach life, how we approach politics, how we approach international relations, those foundations are strong," he said, "And I don't want to see us throw any babies out with the bathwater."

The recent Halifax International Security Forum, which Canada helped fund and once again played host to, had a special session on the role "middle powers" can play, including a topic "Go Canada!" The Forum also unveiled a so-called Handbook for Democracies, entitled *China vs Democracy: The Greatest Game*, which states:

"While the United States remains the free world's natural leader, alliances and partnerships among democracies will be different than those of the twentieth century. Reimagining democratic alliances that are fit for the 21st century is the most urgent task of the day."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, speaking at the Nixon Library this past summer, put it this way: "The challenge of China demands exertion, energy from democracies -- those in Europe, those in Africa, those in South America, and especially those in the Indo-Pacific region. And if we don't act now ultimately the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] will erode our freedoms and subvert the rules-based order that our societies have worked so hard to build. If we bend the knee now, our children's children may be at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party, whose actions are the primary challenge today in the free world. [...] So we can't face this challenge alone. The United Nations, NATO, the G7 countries, the G20, our combined economic, diplomatic, and military power is surely enough to meet this challenge if we direct it clearly and with great courage."

Canada is an instrument of precisely these reactionary politics at the UN: "reimagining democratic alliances that are fit for the 21st century," at the expense of the UN itself if necessary; conspiring with like-minded "international partners" to block nations from pursuing their own nation-

building projects; and turning UN forums into battlegrounds against those considered rivals, are all par for the course.

In an October 23 *Globe and Mail* interview, Rae alluded to the kind of "reimagining" Canada has in mind. "Sovereignty," he said, "is not the only principle recognized in the [UN] Charter, and over the last 70-odd years we've created, not only the Universal Declaration, but a number of institutions to focus on human rights." He accused Russia and China of "making a strict interpretation of the UN Charter" to pit "sovereignty" against "human rights." Rae must have in mind the imperialist Responsibility to Protect (R2P) thesis, which Canada crafted and which the U.S. and NATO use to run roughshod over the UN Charter. For example, R2P was used by Canada to justify the destruction of Yugoslavia and Libya.

Just ahead of the Halifax International Security Forum this year, Canada joined a group of 39 countries organized by the United States to accuse China of "human rights violations" and "genocide" against the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang. Britain presented a joint statement to this effect. As Canada's Ambassador to the UN, Rae stated that he could not produce evidence to substantiate the claims, but called on the UN Human Rights Council to investigate to see if something could be found.

The UN has already substantiated evidence that Canada mistreats Indigenous nations. Would Rae support a "colour revolution" to bring about "regime change" in Canada and inspire covert terrorist acts in Canada as is done against China? No discussion is permitted on the basis of the UN system which recognizes all countries as equal, big or small, based on sovereignty. Adding doctrines like R2P in the name of protecting human rights is a pragmatic and unjustifiable move which destroys the principled basis of international relations to permit crimes against the peace.

As for peace and upholding the principles of the UN Charter, at an October 24 Security Council meeting regarding Syria, Rae turned truth on its head, accusing Russia of prolonging the conflict in Syria by using its veto against further U.S. intervention. The war in Syria was begun by U.S. imperialism, Canada and other NATO allies in violation of the UN Charter. Terrorist bands inflicted huge damage upon the people of Syria, under the watchful eye of a U.S. and NATO occupation. This includes the so-called White Helmets, private military contractors Canada pays for and protects under cover of a humanitarian agency. The U.S. has even outright seized control of Syrian oil reserves but Canada presents discussion of any substantive issues as taboo. It is past-master at creating mechanisms which make sure no discussion takes place.



Just this past week, on November 27, more than 70 countries at the UN called for an immediate end to unilateral coercive measures -- i.e., sanctions and embargoes which the U.S. primarily has imposed on various countries. Such measures were condemned as a violation of human rights and the sovereignty of nations, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada however did not participate or pronounce its opposition to unilateral coercive measures.

These are but some of the latest examples of what Canada is up to at the UN under Bob Rae's

stewardship. Attempts to "reimagine" alliances that fit the U.S. imperialist agenda for the 21st century are unacceptable. They exist in the heads of those who do not want to accept reality as it is. They think that the conditions which have far outstripped their 19th century games still prevail. Afghanistan remains as elusive as it was then and to charge into the Valley of Death like the Light Brigade did is just as disastrous a course today. It is pathetic that Justin Trudeau, Chrystia Freeland and Bob Rae have not learned that duty, today, is not to "King and Country." It is to the peoples of the world and the well-being of the natural and social environment. It is for the realization of the peoples' cause for peace, freedom and democracy in the 21st century. Going up against a force 6 billion-strong is not only openly foolish; it is reckless indeed.

Notes

1. Middlepowerhood

Giovanni Botero, a mayor of Milan in the 15th century, defined a "middle power" as an actor with sufficient strength and authority to stand on its own without the need for help from others. Since then, the concept of middle power has been consistently mentioned in the field of international relations. The "grading" of state actors first became a subject of diplomatic debates at the peace settlement of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. It was then that a class of middle powers was formally recognized, among them the states of Germany.

The concept of middle powers received serious examination in the final stages of World War II in relation to Canada and Australia. The two countries tried to find ways of enhancing their influence based on their contributions to the Allies. At the early stages of the establishment of the United Nations, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King insisted that middle power countries should co-operate with each other, with an eye to securing their influence in international society, suggesting the concept of "Middlepowerhood" in 1944. In Australia, Minister for External Affairs Herbert Evatt discussed the concept of middle powers with a view to secure his country's national interest in a new world order after World War II. Since then, the concept of middle power has become a trademark of the foreign policy of the two countries.

("A Critical Review of the Concept of Middle Power" by Dong-min Shin, *E-International Relations*, December 4, 2015.)

2. In 1942, Canadian diplomat Hume Wrong emphasized that international society should respect Canada's role as a middle power in three functional criteria: extent of involvement, interest, and ability.

The behavioural perspective holds the view that a country is a middle power if it plays certain roles considered as those of a middle power or if it identifies itself as such. Professor Andrew F. Cooper and his colleagues proposed that pursuing multilateral solutions to international problems, preferring compromise positions in international disputes and embracing notions of good international citizenship constitute the typical behaviour of a middle power.

The third approach is the hierarchical perspective which ranks and categorizes states by applying standards relating to their capabilities. It tends to use statistical indices for categorizing countries such as size of territory, GDP, the volume of trade and foreign currency reserves, population, and number of soldiers. Countries with medium-range capabilities are grouped as middle powers, and great powers and weak powers can be categorized in the same manner.

(Ibid.)

(With files from TML Archives, Government of Canada, Globe and Mail, Canada-Haiti Information Project, United Nations. E-international Relations. Photos: TML)

Canada's Despicable Role in Opposing Palestinian Human Rights

- Yi Nicholls -



February 1, 2020. Montreal demonstration stands with Palestinian people against U.S. so-called Deal of the Century.

On November 19, Canada voted along with 162 other countries in favour of a draft UN resolution affirming the Palestinian right to self-determination. The resolution emphasized "the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to their independent State of Palestine" and "stressed the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides," based on a two-state solution.

The resolution passed 163 to five with 10 abstentions. In addition to Israel and the U.S., the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Nauru also voted against the resolution. Australia, Cameroon, Guatemala, Honduras, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Togo and Tonga all abstained.

In previous years Canada voted with Israel against the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination but for the second straight year, prompted by the U.S. Secretary of State's decision last year to reverse the position of the State Department's legal opinion that deemed Israeli settlements to be illegal, it voted for the resolution. At the same time, it voted against 15 other resolutions affirming Palestinian rights, all raising substantial issues which relate to the implementation of the first resolution.



Canada is playing games unworthy of any country which claims to stand for rights. In fact, for the past 20 years Canada's voting record on

Palestinian issues has moved consistently in a direction which defends Israel's violation of its duties as an occupying power. This trend coincided with then Prime Minister Paul Martin's appointment of the Zionist Irwin Cotler as Minister of Justice. This was followed by the adoption of extremist Zionist positions by the Harper government, which the Trudeau Liberals are continuing to implement. Trudeau's appointment of the self-avowed Zionist, Bob Rae, as Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations is par for the course and also reveals the path Canada has chosen in international affairs, to take up every reactionary counterrevolutionary cause which pushes the U.S. as so-called indispensable nation while claiming to be humanitarian and the greatest defender of peace, democracy and rights.



This past week the Trudeau Government named Irwin Cotler as Canada's "Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Anti-Semitism." It is well known that Cotler has been advocating internationally on behalf of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance whose definition of the "new anti-Semitism" labels any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic. To reward with this appointment the despicable activities of Cotler and his attacks on the struggles of the Palestinian people and

their supporters around the world for basic human rights is a clear indication that the pretense of the Trudeau Liberals of being on the side of human rights and freedom in defence of the Palestinian people is hollow.

The vote on the resolution affirming Palestine's right to self-determination took place on the UN's Third Committee which, each year, considers a package of 16 resolutions on important issues facing the Palestinian people. The resolutions, listed below, now go to the UN General Assembly for debate and vote in plenary session in December. Click on the abbreviated titles below to see more detailed information.

1. Natural Resources: "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources"

In brief: Brings attention to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and demands that Israel stops damaging or exploiting those resources.

2. Self-Determination: "The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination"

In brief: Reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to their independent State of Palestine.

3. Assistance: "Assistance to the Palestinian people"

In brief: Calls on the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians.

4. Israeli Practices: "Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem"

In brief: Demands that Israel stops violating international law in the occupied territories, and calls for international protection of the Palestinian civilian population.

5. Settlements: "Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan"

In brief: Reaffirms that Israeli settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace, and urges UN member states to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between Israel proper and its settlements.

6. Applicability Geneva: "Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of August 12, 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories"

In brief: Reaffirms that the Geneva Convention is applicable to Israel's occupation, and urges Israel to comply with the provisions of international law.

7. Special Committee: "Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories"

In brief: Tells the UN's "Special Committee" on this issue to continue to investigate Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

8. Refugees' Properties: "Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues"

In brief: Reaffirms that Palestinian refugees are entitled to their property, and asks the UN to protect Arab assets and property rights in Israel.

9. UNRWA: "Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East" (UNRWA)

In brief: Recognizes the work of the UNRWA, which is the agency responsible for Palestinian refugees, and urges the international community to support it.

10. Displaced Persons 1967: "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities"

In brief: Reaffirms the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

11. UNRWA Assistance: "Assistance to Palestine refugees"

In brief: Extends the mandate of the UNRWA.

12. Occupation of East Jerusalem: "Jerusalem"

In brief: Condemns Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem as illegal, calls for a just and lasting solution that takes into account the legitimate concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians, and calls on all parties to respect the historic status quo in regard to holy places.

13. Peaceful Settlement: "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine"

In brief: Calls for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, calls for Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and urges the international community not to recognize any unilateral changes to the pre-1967 borders.

14. DPI Info Program: "Special information program on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat"

In brief: Extends the mandate of the "special information program on the question of Palestine," which is undertaken by the UN Secretariat's Department of Global Communications (formerly the Department of Public Information (DPI)). Under this program, the department collects, archives, and distributes extensive information about Palestine, including related UN activities.

15. DPR: "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat"

In brief: Renews the mandate of the UN Secretariat's Division for Palestinian Rights, which monitors developments in Palestine, organizes meetings and events, and maintains the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL).

16. CEIRPP: "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People"

In brief: Renews the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The committee was established in 1975, and has a mandate to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It organizes meetings and events and has a variety of information and training programs.

To see the UN Dashboard on Canada's voting history, [click here](#).

(Photos: TML)



Dangerous Self-Serving Invocation of Holocaust Remembrance to Cover Up Crimes Against Palestinians

- Louis Lang -



On November 25, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau named Irwin Cotler Canada's "Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Anti-Semitism." The announcement from the Prime Minister's Office stated: "With a longstanding record of leadership in the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, and hate, and extensive experience in human rights and justice including in cases related to mass atrocities, Mr. Cotler will lead the Government of Canada's delegation to the

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)."

Canadians cannot accept the statement from the PMO as it is full of contradictions and not based on facts. The pretentious claims of fighting against hate and intolerance, and defending human rights are being used by the Canadian government to cover up the fact that its main priority has been and continues to be the defence of Israeli Zionism. As far as Mr. Cotler is concerned, the claims of his "extensive experience in human rights and justice" does not stand up to scrutiny either.

Far from fighting racism and anti-Semitism, Trudeau's appointment of Cotler serves to further promote his activities internationally advocating for the "new anti-Semitism" movement which seeks to label criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic. As one of the main backers of the Canadian government's labelling of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement for Palestinian human rights as anti-Semitic, Cotler has also shown his disregard for human rights.

As head of Canada's delegation to the IHRA, Cotler has the government's approval to pursue the campaign to implement the IHRA redefinition of anti-Semitism. The IHRA already has a long track record of suppressing the voices of Palestinian human rights supporters around the world and seeks to extend the definition to silence more voices.

The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism is as follows:

"Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

Two of the activities that the IHRA alleges to be anti-Semitic behaviour are:

"Claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour," and

"Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis."

Cotler attempts to justify the need for this new definition by claiming that a new form of anti-Semitism exists. In a 2010 item for the *National Post*, Cotler stated:

"In a word, classical anti-Semitism is the discrimination against, denial of, or assault upon the rights of Jews to live as equal members of whatever society they inhabit. The new anti-Semitism involves the discrimination against, denial of, or assault upon the right of the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations, with Israel as the targeted collective Jew among nations."^[1]

On November 30, Trudeau said that Cotler "will support advocacy and outreach efforts with Canadians, civil society and academia to advance the implementation of this definition across the country and its adoption internationally."

This entire argument is self-serving and dishonest because Zionism, which is a state ideology, is being attributed to Jewish people as a whole. It is doubly dishonest because these so-called defenders of the right to self-determination do not have a word to say about the ongoing violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people other than to label their just struggle as terrorism.

Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) is documenting examples in several countries where the IHRA definition has been used -- or attempts have been made -- to cancel events or silence Palestine solidarity movements.^[2]

As Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, Cotler has further exposed himself as

an apologist for imperialist violations of the sovereignty of nations in the quest for world domination. Under the guise of defending human rights and the Chairmanship of Cotler, the Wallenberg Centre is actively promoting the imperialist doctrine of "responsibility to protect" (R2P), which is being used to justify regime change and foreign interference against any country which does not submit to imperialist dictate.

In an article co-authored by Cotler, published by the *New York Times* on February 28, 2011, titled "Libya and the Responsibility to Protect," he says:

"The situation in Libya is a test case for the Security Council and its implementation of the [R2P] doctrine. Yet it remains the case that, as the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, put it, 'loss of time means more loss of lives.' The Security Council must do more -- and fast. It is our collective responsibility to ensure [R2P] is an effective approach to protect people and human rights."

It is now well known that many of those "mass atrocities" of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, so vehemently condemned by Cotler, were nothing but fabrications designed to justify military aggression which resulted in the wholesale destruction of Libya by the U.S. and NATO member states including Canada.

Now, Cotler continues to play his nefarious role trying to justify U.S. imperialist ambitions in Venezuela. *Foreign Policy* magazine carried an article co-authored by Irwin Cotler on February 6, 2019, titled, "Recognizing Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's Leader Isn't a Coup. It's an Embrace of Democracy." Once again Cotler poses as the saviour of the people against what he calls "Maduro's brutal and criminal assault on the liberal democratic order," and says U.S. imperialism is justified to use any means necessary to "transition to democratic governance."

The appointment of Cotler comes as crimes are being committed against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, especially in Gaza, where for the past 14 years the people have suffered continuous bombing and military attacks against civilians by the Israeli Army. Israel has turned Gaza into the largest open air prison in the world where over 2 million people are under attack and forced to live in inhuman conditions.

These barbaric acts are being condemned by people all over the world and Israel is desperate to divert attention from its responsibilities as an Occupying Power and from its continuous construction of illegal settlements on Palestinian land. An Occupying Power is required to provide public safety, sufficient hygiene and public health standards, as well as the food and medical care to the population under occupation. Collective punishment, regularly carried out by Israel, is prohibited.

With the passing of the "Nation State Law" Israel has become an officially discriminatory state on the basis of religion and Israel's policy of systematically destroying Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem while building illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, one of the methods of ethnic cleansing it has used since 1948 to drive Palestinians off their lands.[3] These criminal acts and violations of international law are what Irwin Cotler will continue to try to cover up and he will use his position as Canada's "Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance" to turn truth on its head to suggest that the Zionist state is the victim of anti-Semitism.

This must not be allowed to pass! The Canadian government brings shame on itself by invoking the memory of the European Holocaust to justify inflicting such suffering on the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, to associate Cotler's name with Holocaust Remembrance is an insult to Holocaust survivors and their families whose suffering is being used to promote the same unbridled racism

and obscurantist mentality of the Zionists which has caused so much oppression and misery in the past.

1. According to its website, "The IHRA (formerly the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, or ITF) was initiated in 1998 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. Today the IHRA's membership consists of 34 member countries, each of whom recognizes that international political coordination is imperative to strengthen the moral commitment of societies and to combat growing Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

"The IHRA's network of trusted experts share their knowledge on early warning signs of present-day genocide and education on the Holocaust. This knowledge supports policymakers and educational multipliers in their efforts to develop effective curricula, and it informs government officials and NGOs active in global initiatives for genocide prevention.

"The Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust (or "Stockholm Declaration") is the founding document of the IHRA and it continues to serve as an ongoing affirmation of each IHRA member country's commitment to shared principles.

"The declaration was the outcome of the International Forum convened in Stockholm between January 27-29, 2000 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. The Forum was attended by the representatives of 46 governments including: 23 Heads of State or Prime Ministers and 14 Deputy Prime Ministers or Ministers.

"Their vision has remained intact, unaltered throughout the ensuing years, demonstrating its universal and enduring value." (www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us)

2. The IJV document can be found [here](#).

3. The National State Law is the main legislation that bases rights on religion. These are the three main points of the law:

i) The "right to exercise national self-determination" in Israel is "unique to the Jewish people."

ii) Hebrew is Israel's official language. Arabic -- the language widely spoken by Arab Israelis -- is reduced to a "special status."

iii) It recognizes "Jewish settlement" as a "national value" and mandates that the state "will labour to encourage and promote its establishment and development."

The most recent application of the Nation State Law was in Karmiel. The newspaper *Haaretz* carried the following report on December 1, 2020:

"In November 2020, using the law as justification, the Israeli magistrate's court ruled that Karmiel is 'Jewish city' and that Arabic-language schools or funding transport for Arab schoolchildren are liable to alter city's demographic balance and damage its character, essentially blocking access to schools for Arab children in the northern city of Karmiel. The court implied that facilitating this access would incentivize Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel to move into the city, thus damaging its 'Jewish character.'"

A *Haaretz* editorial discussing the ruling stated: "The nation-state law has legalized racism and Jewish supremacy, and allows the state to discriminate against Arab citizens in order to keep them from living where they choose under equal conditions, thus deepening ethnic segregation in Israel."

(Photos: TML, Ralph RH)

Alarming Developments in the United States
**Presidential Power Used to Attack and
Restructure Federal Workforce**

- Kathleen Chandler -



In October, U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order calling for perhaps hundreds of thousands of federal workers to be re-classified in a manner that would basically render them "at-will" workers. It allows the executive to fire the workers without cause or recourse, hire without regard to existing contracts and standards, and deny other protections. They would also be denied union representation. All federal workers considered to be serving in "policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating positions," are to be reclassified into this new "excepted service" hiring authority, called Schedule F. President-Elect Biden has so far not said if he will try to rescind the executive order.

Trump called on department heads to identify all such workers no later than January 19, the day before he is scheduled, at this point, to leave office. On November 23 it was reported that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will reclassify 88 per cent of its workforce (425 workers) to Schedule F. While OMB is relatively small, it plays a significant role in proposing and managing budget affairs. The change gives the president greater authority in such matters. Generally the process is being fast tracked and the Energy Department is also said to be moving quickly to reclassify workers.

The executive order makes clear that the aim is to remove existing barriers to the executive arbitrarily hiring and firing federal workers, including senior workers: "To effectively carry out the broad array of activities assigned to the executive branch under law ... requires that the President have appropriate management oversight regarding this select cadre of professionals. [... A]gencies should have a greater degree of appointment flexibility with respect to these employees than is afforded by the existing competitive service process. [...] Agencies need the flexibility to expeditiously remove poorly performing employees from these positions without facing extensive delays or litigation."

The action is a direct takeover by narrow private interests of the civil society arrangements. It is an attack on the unionized federal workforce, removing agreed practices for hiring and firing and performance standards. It also serves as a threat to all workers and imposes downward pressure

on their working conditions. As is occurring more generally, a contract is no longer a contract, and service is no longer for the public good.

Federal workers have protested the executive order and called on Congress to block it. The President of the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest union for federal workers covering 670,000 workers said: "This is the most profound undermining of the civil service in our lifetimes. The president has doubled down on his effort to politicize and corrupt the professional service. This executive order strips due process rights and protections from perhaps hundreds of thousands of federal employees and will enable political appointees and other officials to hire and fire these workers at will." The National Treasury Employees Union, which includes the OMB workers, has filed a lawsuit saying the Executive Order is illegal as it supersedes existing law.

The process involves the heads of the many government departments deciding which workers fall into the new category. Their recommendations are then sent to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) which has the final say. However the definition for what constitutes "policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating positions" is not provided. A memo issued by the OPM giving guidelines states: "Neither the U.S. Code nor judicial precedents precisely define these terms in the context of their statutory usage." It then repeats the generalizations provided in the executive order, which are very broad. They include any worker conducting "collective bargaining negotiations," "viewing, circulating or otherwise working with proposed regulations, guidance, executive orders, or other non-public policy proposals or deliberations," "substantive participation in the development or drafting of regulations," or "substantive policy-related work in an agency." Participation in any one of these would mean reclassification. The OPM could authorize firings even before January 19, based on recommendations from department heads.

Commonly the vast civil service bureaucracy remains in place from one administration to the next. This includes, for example, most of the 760,000 civilian workers at the Pentagon and many of the 240,000 at the Department of Homeland Security. The executive order is not simply creating an "at-will" workforce. It is also restructuring this bureaucracy so that it is unstable and, according to the self-serving calculations of those mandating this executive order, less of a force for the executive to contend with. It also serves to remove the memory an established workforce carries with it in regard to standards for themselves and for governance more generally, including those for accountability.

There are currently proposals in Congress not to fund the executive order, though that is not likely to prevent various department heads from moving forward with it or block the start of firings.

Letters have been sent to Congress opposing the executive order. They bring out its restructuring quality and strengthening of the executive power. Speaking to hiring and firing protections, one letter states that current arrangements "do not exist for the sake of the civil servants themselves, but rather to ensure the government delivers services insulated from undue political influence. They ensure continuity of government through changing administrations, preserving institutional knowledge and expertise within the government. They safeguard the rule of law, protecting employees choosing adherence to the Constitution rather than political party. The need for Congress to act is urgent, especially as we are in the midst of a transition. Failing to act will set a dangerous precedent, signaling congressional indifference to a substantial expansion of executive power. The executive order upends a longstanding legislative framework that ensures a nonpartisan civil service -- a framework that assures the laws Congress passes will be implemented as written, and the funds they appropriate will be disbursed as directed. If Congress remains silent, it indicates acceptance not just of this executive order, but of future administrative actions to dismantle the legislative framework supporting a nonpartisan civil service."

President Trump's mission as president was to break the bonds of existing governing structures

and rule of law at home and abroad, following Obama's deportations and drone warfare. Trump's actions with child detention camps at the border, repression of demonstrators using federal forces, and more recently disregard for transition norms are just a few examples. He has consolidated a government of police powers by eliminating limitations on these police powers and applying them more openly at home, as well as abroad. The more the executive concentrates the monopoly of the use of force in his hands, the greater his ability to act with impunity, which is to be considered "normal." The executive order is one such example of attempting to broadly attack the federal workforce and restructure it in a manner that favours executive police powers. It is part of destroying even the concept of a civil service dedicated to serving the public good -- something made all the more obvious as many of these workers are critical to providing needed health and welfare services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All of it shows that workers in every walk of life and field of endeavour must create new forms of organization and resistance given that everything the president is doing is not outside the Constitution. It is crucial to not permit the space for change to be occupied by arch reactionaries who are hell-bent on turning the entire workforce over to narrow private interests, accountable to no one.

(Photos: AFGE)

Congress Threatens Public with Government Shut Down as COVID-19 Cases Reach Record Levels

To avoid a government shutdown on December 11, the U.S. Congress now has less than a week to pass either their giant \$1.4 trillion omnibus budget bill or a stop-gap continuing resolution. In conditions where COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths are at record highs, the inability of Congress to pass a budget is a horrific threat to the public. Hundreds of thousands of federal workers, many critical to providing health and welfare services, could be laid off and services in general curtailed.



The *National Defense Authorization Act*, which provides \$740 billion yearly for war, has also not passed. It has readily passed for the past 59 years, every year with large majorities -- an indication of the common support among the rulers for U.S. wars of aggression and interference abroad.

There has been no progress on providing funds for COVID-19 relief. Failures on all fronts underline that conflicts among the rulers remain unresolved and that service to what constitutes "the public" and the conception of "public good" and what constitutes "public interest" are obsolete.

The dysfunction serves to underscore that the concentration of arbitrary power in the Office of the President is also not solving problems. Trump's threats to veto bills is a main factor in the current confrontation and reflect his efforts to strengthen executive powers over budget matters. He has threatened to veto these three bills before Congress dealing with budgetary matters if they do not include his demands. Even Senate head Mitch McConnell, a key Trump ally, drew this

conclusion -- speaking to Congressional representatives McConnell said, "I like to remind everybody that the way you get results is, you have to have a president's signature." In 2018 Trump's refusal to sign the budget bill triggered the longest government shutdown to date.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (Alabama) indicated December 2 that a "stop-gap" continuing resolution looks likely for the budget. A "stimulus" bill may also be included in such a measure. However the White House has said it will not guarantee Trump will sign such a bill and avert a shutdown.

A new proposal for \$908 billion in "stimulus" funding is now being discussed, far less than the \$2.2 trillion passed in a House bill but not debated in the Senate. The new proposal does not include any direct funds for individuals, \$300 instead of \$600 per week for extended unemployment funds and none of the related funds for protective gear and testing. McConnell and the White House are calling for only \$332.7 billion. Budget bills had been a means to divide public funds among the contending monopoly forces to lessen conflicts -- another mechanism that no longer functions.

For the *National Defense Authorization Act*, a 4,500-page "conference report" which reconciles the Senate and House bills and allows for no amendments, has now been released. It is expected to pass both Houses this coming week. It reflects differences, including within the Republican coalition, on issues like maintaining troops in Germany and Afghanistan, renaming military bases honouring Confederate Generals and the use of unidentified federal forces against demonstrators. Trump has continued to say he will veto it.

Another issue Trump has raised is eliminating a portion of a federal law known as Section 230. It protects companies like Facebook and Twitter from liability for posts by their users. Conflict over how and whether such internet giants should remove or censor content, or mark it as "in dispute," has increased with the election conflict and Trump's repeated claims of fraud. The conference report does not eliminate Section 230 and Republicans are saying "230 has nothing to do with the military." Senator Jim Inhofe (Oklahoma), the Republican Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said it was not part of the bill. This is an indication that alliances within and between Democrats and Republicans and Congress and the president operate more like coalitions -- both contending and coalescing -- and are fluid rather than fixed.

Whether or not one or another of these bills passes, the dysfunction of Congress and the usual mechanisms for resolving conflicts -- such as dividing the budget, and the election itself -- remain. COVID-19 relief for the public is urgent. But in terms of politics and political relations of governance -- which include public needs and provide for negotiations to reach settlements -- there has been nothing since the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* (CARES Act) back in March. Even agreement on ensuring that \$455 billion in remaining funds from the CARES Act reach the public is not possible. Add in Trump's efforts to further undermine Congress as a legislative body while usurping more power for the presidency and it is evident that the existing set-up can only bring more crises and dysfunction. It is the people, left out of the equation in all these conflicts, who are decisive in bringing about the changes needed for new governing institutions that put the people and their rights, at home and abroad, at the centre.



(Voice of Revolution. Photos: California Nurses Assn, SEIU)

Election Clash Remains Unresolved

President Trump still refuses to concede. The main battleground states, such as Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia and Nevada, have all certified the vote. Enough other states have done so to officially give Biden more than the 270 Electoral College votes needed for election. Even so, Trump released a 46-minute video on social media claiming fraud.

"This is probably the most fraudulent election that anyone's ever seen," Trump said. Saying that the results should be overturned and that the Supreme Court should intervene, he added: "Hopefully, they will do what's right for our country because our country can't live with this kind of an election."

Trump has also said he will not participate in Biden's swearing-in on Inauguration Day, a significant part of the traditional "peaceful transition" of power. Whether he will leave office without conceding or take action of some kind to declare a national emergency and block the transition remains to be seen.



While Trump has persisted, others in his administration have conceded. Attorney General William Barr said the Justice Department had uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could change the election outcome. Christopher Krebs, Director of the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, also voiced confidence in the integrity of the election. Since being fired by Trump, he has said in public appearances, "The American people should have 100 per cent confidence in their votes," and that Trump's claims are "farcical" and "nonsense."

The majority of Republicans in Congress have said nothing, while also accepting Congressional elections as valid. Trump has attacked Republican Governors and Secretaries of State, such as those in Georgia and Arizona, for certifying their elections in favour of Biden. Both Governors had been supported by Trump.

In Georgia the situation is particularly complex, as two run-off elections for U.S. Senators take place January 5. Trump's allies in the state have used language like "treason" against the Secretary of State and said election officials should be shot or hung. Still people are supposed to get out and vote. One of the lawsuits by Trump's allies is blocking election officials from preparing voting machines for the January 5 election. The Governor and Secretary of State have asked the court to allow them to proceed but no ruling has occurred. All of this creates an irrational situation for voters.

The many contending authorities at the federal and state level have created a situation where not only do the results remain in dispute but the entire process has been discredited. Certification, for example, has made clear that a handful of people from the Republicans and Democrats decide whether to certify or not. And final certification still rests with Congress on January 6. Trump is evidently going to continue until then, even though the slates certified for the Electoral College in Biden's favour meet December 14. The results are then forwarded to Congress. It remains to be seen if a government shutdown will take place on December 11, a very real possibility, and how this impacts that vote.

To speak of treason is civil war talk and a violent outbreak remains possible. It appears though, that with forces like Barr conceding and top level businessmen demanding it, the rulers will succeed in preventing that for now by getting Trump to leave office, whether he concedes or not. Biden, however, still lacks authority. Because of this and the usurpation by the presidential authority of matters the Constitution allots to states, conflict and contention will remain, not only between state and federal authorities but also within and between the president and military and civilian bureaucracy. Forces on all sides are still talking about treason.



Whatever their conflicts, the ruling oligarchs all act to keep the people out of power and the rich in power. Reforms being suggested are all in this vein, trying to restore credibility to the election process while keeping intact the basic fraud that this process actually keeps the people out of power and does not reflect their interests and drive for a pro-social, anti-war direction for the country. The elections have further revealed that it is the existing relations of power that must be changed and it is the people themselves, through their many fights for rights, that are organizing to bring this change about.

(Voice of Revolution. Photos: VOR, sarah4justice)

December 6 Elections in Venezuela

Canada, Hands Off Venezuela!

December 5-6 Pickets: Results of Venezuelan Elections Must Be Respected



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On Sunday, December 6, the Venezuelan people will elect a new legislature. There are 20.7 million registered voters in Venezuela entitled to go to the polls to elect members of the National

Assembly. There are 14,400 candidates from 107 political organizations presenting themselves for election. In spite of the international campaign spearheaded by the U.S., Canada and the European Union to discredit that country's electoral process, Venezuela will follow its constitutional process to the letter.

Unfortunately, Canada heads the reactionary organization called the Lima Group. This organization is inspired by the U.S.-led secret agencies and think tanks plotting to overthrow the Bolivarian nation-building project so as to impose U.S. hegemony over Our America.

TML Weekly calls on Canadians to demand that Canada uphold the democratic decision-making process of the Venezuelan people and respect a verdict which is reached, without foreign interference and fraud.

(Photos: TML)

Unprecedented Election for a New National Assembly

- Margaret Villamizar -



December 3, 2020. Mass rally in the streets of Caracas as the election campaign draws to a close.

The election being held December 6 was called in keeping with Venezuela's constitution, which requires that a new National Assembly be elected before the term of the current one expires on January 5, 2021.

The National Assembly is one of five independent branches of the state. Its role includes passing legislation and constitutional reforms, approving public budgets, auditing and/or removing public officials and ministers, approving international agreements, appointing the public powers -- such as rectors of the National Electoral Council and Supreme Court judges -- and authorizing any deployment outside the country of the National Bolivarian Armed Forces and inside the country of foreign military missions.

There are 20.7 million registered voters and a total of 277 deputies, 111 more than in the current

legislature, to be elected. Forty-eight of these will be elected on a new national list system and 96 on regional lists, both via the D'Hondt proportional representation method. There will also be 130 deputies from 67 geographical constituencies elected through a first-past-the-post system and three Indigenous deputies chosen by their communities. All will serve for five years, from January 5, 2021 to January 5, 2026.

Voting will take place using new domestically-built electronic touchscreen machines. In March of this year over 49,000 voting machines -- almost all of the country's supply -- were destroyed in an arson attack on the warehouse where they were being stored. After an individual votes using the touchscreen, the system prints a paper ballot showing their selection(s), which the voter can verify before depositing the paper in the ballot box. The voter then signs and leaves a fingerprint in a record book, making it extremely difficult for fraud to be committed. The paper ballots can also be compared to electronic tallies in an audit of the results. Venezuela's voting system is widely regarded as one of the most technologically advanced, transparent and reliable in the world.



International observers inspect Venezuelan voting machine.

The election is being conducted in keeping with World Health Organization biosafety guidelines. Face masks will be mandatory for voters and officials and there will be sanitizer at all voting stations. The touchscreens machines will be disinfected after every vote. The Bolivarian Militia are charged with seeing to it that physical distancing protocols are maintained inside and outside polling places, and electoral staff are required to test negative for COVID-19 before assuming their duties.

The President of the National Electoral Council, Indira Alfonzo, announced this week that over 200 international electoral observers from 34 countries, along with the Council of Latin American Electoral Experts, will be involved in monitoring the vote. The European Union declined the invitation to send an observer mission after conditions it attempted to impose, including that the election be postponed, were not accepted by Venezuela.



December 4, 2020. International observers in Venezuela to monitor the elections.

The U.S. government -- with support from both Republicans and Democrats -- has been actively interfering in this election as part of its unrelenting regime change agenda. On top of its brutal

economic sanctions and theft of the Venezuelan people's resources, it has sanctioned more officials of the Venezuelan government and two officials of the National Electoral Council, including its president, Indira Alfonzo, accusing them of "election interference" for refusing to allow Venezuela's constitution, laws and sovereignty to be set aside so the U.S. can decide for Venezuelans what a "free and fair" election looks like!

The coalition of U.S.-backed opposition parties -- referred to as the "G4," which includes Juan Guaidó's Popular Will party, along with Justice First, Democratic Action and A New Era -- are predictably boycotting the election and calling on Venezuelans to do the same. However sections of some G4 parties have rejected the boycott campaign and are participating in the election with candidates, clearly fed up with their leaders' preference for violent coup attempts over elections and support for the U.S. economic war against their country. The U.S. has imposed sanctions on five of these opposition leaders who broke with the G4, accusing them of "complicity" with the government.

In sync with the U.S. imperialists, the Trudeau government continues to disgrace itself by singing the praises of the hapless Juan Guaidó, referring to the U.S. puppet as the "legitimate" president of Venezuela interested only in "restoring democracy" in the country, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Canada also reflexively declared the December 6 election to be "illegitimate," as it has every other election since the last parliamentary election in 2015, which a coalition of opposition parties won with a large majority. That opposition-controlled National Assembly, whose term is coming to an end, is the only branch of the Venezuelan state Canada considers "legitimate" even though one of its first acts was to defy a Supreme Court order to suspend three deputies accused of vote buying. After that the National Assembly went on to pass laws deemed unconstitutional, leading the Supreme Court to declare it in contempt of the law, and render its decisions null.

From the outset, the opposition coalition engaged in one illegal manoeuvre after another to try to oust President Nicolás Maduro from his elected position. When that failed the Assembly became a base for creating the fictitious "interim presidency" of deputy Juan Guaidó as the U.S and Canada attempted to foist an illegal parallel government on the Venezuelan people. It was also used treacherously to promote the U.S-led economic war against them, which Canada and the EU are also part of.

Stakes are therefore very high in the December 6 election. There are 107 political parties and an unprecedented 14,400 candidates vying for seats in an enlarged National Assembly. The parties are grouped mainly in five blocs. One is the Great Patriotic Pole, comprised of the governing United Socialist Party (PSUV) plus seven other parties. Another alliance of parties, the Popular Revolutionary Alternative, also identifies as Chavista and part of the Bolivarian Revolution. Anti-Chavista opposition parties, unable to unite in a single coalition this time, are divided among three separate alliances.





December 3, 2020, Caracas.

The opposition faction headed by Guaidó and Leopoldo López recently announced that along with boycotting the election it will hold its own "popular consultation" from December 6-12. These gangsters who were behind at least two failed attempts to install themselves in power through a violent coup d'état, and who have all along supported the murderous U.S. sanctions, are asking Venezuelans, including those living outside the country, to answer three survey questions: Do you demand the end of the usurpation of the presidency by Nicolás Maduro and call for free, fair and verifiable presidential and parliamentary elections? Do you reject the event of December 6 and ask the international community to ignore it? Do you demand that the necessary steps be taken before the international community to activate cooperation, accompaniment and assistance to rescue our democracy?

But the Venezuelan people have not resisted every manner of perfidy and hardship, even at the cost of their lives, to defend their Bolivarian Revolution only to do an about-face and agree that the solution to the country's problems lies in handing over control of its institutions and resources to self-serving local and foreign oligarchs so they can advance their own private interests at the expense of the Venezuelan nation and people -- a counterrevolutionary neo-liberal agenda these elements have tried but so far failed to impose by force.

To the contrary, the organized people of Venezuela have shown themselves to be staunch defenders of their right to self-determination and sovereignty, the international rule of law, and the right of all peoples to live in peace, solving their differences politically rather than through war and coercion. The example of elections in Venezuela, along with those of Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina and Ecuador, among others, are providing the peoples of Our America with profound lessons about the need for the peoples to acquire political power to be able to exercise their sovereignty. The U.S. imperialists and their toadies, like the Trudeau government, will never recognize any result which does not permit them to do whatever they want in a country and to a country. They are past masters at engineering colour revolutions, constitutional coups and all manner of brutal acts, such as took place in Bolivia during the year of the coup they engineered in that country, and which continue in Haiti, Honduras, Colombia and other countries thanks to their criminal use of subversion, interference, assassinations and other mostly covert methods to undermine any attempts of the people to exercise their sovereign decision-making power.

Canadians stand as one with the people of Venezuela and sincerely hope the results of the December 6 elections favour them. No to the interference of the U.S. imperialists, the Organization of American States and Canada's bogus Lima Group and all other "multilateral" fora used as platforms to attack the Bolivarian revolution and the nation-building project of the people of Venezuela!

(With files from Venezuelanalysis.com, Peoples Dispatch, Página 12. Photos: CNE, @NicolasMaduro)

Letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs

- ALBA Social Movements Canada-Ottawa Chapter -

The following letter was sent to Canada's Foreign Minister on December 5 demanding that Canada respect the results of the Venezuelan election.

Elections to choose a new enlarged National Assembly are underway in Venezuela and will be held on Sunday, December 6, 2020. A total of 107 political organizations are running for 277 Parliamentary seats for a five-year term beginning January 5, 2021. Fourteen thousand, four hundred candidates campaigned, taking the necessary precautions against COVID-19. More than 20 million citizens are eligible to vote.

New electoral authorities have made an effort to secure an ample international mission to oversee the election, including the UN, CARICOM and the African Union. The European Union has turned down the invitation after its demand that the vote be postponed was rejected by Venezuela on the grounds that it is constitutionally bound to hold the elections before the end of 2020. More than 300 invitations have gone out to international personalities and regional multilateral organizations to observe the elections. The electoral process will be subject to 16 audits witnessed by party representatives and international observers.

In spite of a terrorist arson attack which destroyed 99 per cent of Venezuela's electronic electoral machines, these have been replaced by 49,539 new, more modern machines designed in Venezuela by Venezuelan technicians.

No sooner were elections in the offing than U.S. authorities stated that they will not recognize the elections, even before they are held. Juan Guaidó, former National Assembly President and self-proclaimed "interim president" of Venezuela, called for a boycott and rejected the elections. Guaidó also called for "street violence," which -- as the experience of the Venezuelan people shows -- means acts of violence committed against the Venezuelan people and infrastructure. His calls are being rejected by the vast majority of opposition parties. The latter question the extremism of factions of the opposition who call for abstentions and promote sanctions against the country to advance their political agenda. Most opposition formations are defending the electoral route as the only valid means to resolve political differences. Furthermore, Washington has levied sanctions against certain of these opposition leaders who decided to participate in the electoral process. On September 22, the Treasury Department sanctioned five opposition leaders, accusing them of "complicity" with the government.

The object of this letter is to call upon the Canadian government to dissociate itself from all these condemnable, anti-democratic and illegal activities against Venezuela. What possible reason could there be for Canada not to recognize the Venezuelan December 6 elections? We call upon the Canadian government to side with democracy, the rule of law and respect for the sovereign decisions of the Venezuelan nation, free from foreign interference and aggression.

Developments in Guatemala

Amid Calls for Resignation, President Seeks Support of Organization of American States

- Gerardo Villagrán del Corral -

Thousands of Guatemalans are still in the streets demanding the resignation of conservative

President Alejandro Giammattei, whom they accuse of not allocating sufficient resources to combat poverty and inequality, while he continues harsh repression and has invoked the Inter-American Democratic Charter.



November 21, 2020. Rally in Plaza de la Constitución.

Approved in 2001, this charter implements a series of measures to restore democratic order in the nations that invoke it, and to guarantee respect for fundamental human rights. Giammattei added that he had communicated with the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Luis Almagro, to ensure dialogue, and expressed his openness to an inclusive negotiation that would lead to an understanding between sectors of society.

The situation of great political instability erupted after a huge popular demonstration held on November 21 in the historic part of Guatemala City, the capital, ended with numerous incidents and the burning of part of the building where the Parliament is located.



November 21, 2020. Fire at legislative building in Guatemala City.

There are suspicions that it was a planned operation by the government to undermine the legitimacy of the protests. Those who assaulted the legislative building were dressed in black and carried sticks to break the building's windows, but they were not arrested by the police present at the scene, according to the Guatemalan newspaper *El Periódico*.

Additional suspicion arose from the fact that the Congress was not fenced off, as it had been hours before the budget was approved. Political and social references in the country expressed

that the vandalism to the Parliament was intended to discredit the legitimacy of the huge demonstration, which took place in a general climate of tranquillity until the violent attack by the police.

According to official figures, one in two children under five in the country suffers from chronic malnutrition, and almost 60 per cent of the Guatemalan population lives below the poverty line.



The president announced that the acts of protest are but a means through which minority groups are attempting to carry out a real coup d'état. In an earlier statement, the OAS recognized the right to protest, but spoke out against the vandalism denounced by authorities, which has been denied by spokespersons for the protesters.

The Alliance for Reforms, which brings together 40 social organizations, demanded the resignation of Interior Minister Gendri Reyes, following the repression of November 21. The vice-president, Guillermo Castillo, who had distanced himself from Giammattei and demanded his resignation, asked the public prosecutor's office to investigate the burning of congressional offices as well as the police repression.



November 28, 2020.

The approved budget leaves ample room for corruption -- a deeply entrenched evil in the country -- because it does not stipulate appropriate control mechanisms to ensure the proper use of resources, granting more resources to ministries that have been the focus of huge irregularities in recent years, such as Communications, Infrastructure and Housing.

The protest on November 21 left at least 15 demonstrators and 12 police officers injured, and more than 30 detained. Police repression extended to several departments of the country.

Congress approved loans of more than \$3.8 billion to address the pandemic, but barely 15 per cent of those resources reached Guatemalans. COVID-19 has left nearly 120,000 people infected and over 4,000 dead in this country of 17 million inhabitants.

The Reason for the Protests

Congress, made up mostly of the ruling party and related parties, approved a budget of nearly \$12.8 billion for 2021, a 25 per cent increase over this year. Most of the funds are directed to

infrastructure with the private sector and do not provide for increases for health or education, or for combatting poverty and child malnutrition.

Congress also designated about \$65,000 for meals for deputies, something that outraged the population because at that time Hurricane Iota was entering the country and causing destruction, leaving poor communities cut off and without food -- communities already affected by the recent passing of another powerful hurricane, Eta, which left 59 dead and almost 100 missing.

This all occurred in a context in which hospitals are without medicines, doctors without pay and the numbers affected by the pandemic are rising. The economy has suffered, tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs and the price of food and other goods has risen.

For this reason, calls were given to demonstrate in various squares across the country, including the "Plaza de la Constitución" (formerly Central Park), demanding the resignation of the president and the congressmen, an end to corruption and the cancellation of the 2021 budget. But thousands of placards demanding a Constituent Assembly were also carried.



November 21, 2020. Protest in Antigua.

The questions are repeated: Are we on the verge of another cycle of protests similar to that of 2015, when massive demonstrations against the corruption of the government of Otto Pérez Molina and Roxana Baldetti occurred? Will it reach levels of violent confrontation?

What is clear is that there is a feeling of anger and indignation against the government, which was expressed in various ways (peaceful and violent), while it cannot and does not wish to respond to citizens' demands and is attempting to use the OAS to "democratically" repress the people.

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(Translated from the original Spanish by TML. Photos: A. Godinez, PDH Guatemala, colaboracion)

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