

**50 years since  
the Portuguese  
Revolution**

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**Defund, disarm,  
abolish the  
police**

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# Socialist Worker

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# Occupy, strike, escalate for PALESTINE



Students in Montreal march to set up an encampment for Gaza at McGill University

# Why we say abolish the police

From a very early age we are inundated with images, stories and myths about the police. The dominant idea is that police are both benevolent and trustworthy and stand as beacons of national and social pride.

Popular culture brings us endless TV shows and movies about the police on guard against the criminal elements in our society. From the Officer Friendly icons we see in pre-school to the fawning media reports every time a cop is killed or injured we get an intensely biased account of the role of police in our society.

There are moments where the veil falls and we get a better glimpse of the actual role of the police. The attacks on pro-Palestine encampments in the US, like the attacks by police during the Black Lives Matter movement are key examples where millions are able to watch the brutality of militarized police in action.

This happens because the police are not benevolent but are a direct product of the need to maintain class rule.

They will lie, commit crimes themselves and use whatever brutality they wish to keep people from questioning their position of power and the position of those that grant them impunity—the ruling class.

## Police and crime

Part of the propaganda effort used to justify the ridiculously large police budgets is the assertion that police are needed to stop crime and protect communities. The problem with that argument is that there is absolutely no evidence that it is true.

A study led by the University of Toronto looked at policing levels and crime rates in 20 cities across Canada in 2023 and found that there is no correlation whatsoever

between the number of cops and crime rates. This fact has been reaffirmed by numerous other studies in the US which show that more cops on the streets doesn't make anyone safer.

In Toronto, the solve rates for police are abysmally low. For example, police solve roughly 15 percent of gun crimes in the city yet with each new shooting there is a wave of propaganda calling for increased police levels to stop gun crimes.

between classes.

The state grows out of the need to maintain this hierarchical imbalance. It will use laws, traditions and when necessary the use of direct physical force against those who step out of line, those who won't accept their position of powerlessness under capitalism. For that the state needs police.

In different places around the world, the police developed based on the needs of the rich. In the US south, the progenitors of police

West Mounted Police and its next generation RCMP is one of mass murder to push people off their land for the benefit of Canadian capital.

Police, despite all their efforts to suggest that they are a necessary force in society, are in fact, a tool of class oppression.

The real reason for the attacks against Palestine protesters is to ensure that the rich maintain their wealth. The student occupations want to see divestment from

based on. And Israel is needed to defend stability for profits in the Middle East.

## Defunding

The call to defund the police has been gaining momentum. The call is often mischaracterized as creating a lawless society. This is simply false and a smokescreen used to justify inaction.

The call to defund the police comes with an understating that crime rates under capitalism are a product of inequality. Rates of theft for example, are not impacted by police levels but tend to fluctuate based on levels of poverty. Investments in social services like housing will do more to decrease crime rates than more cops.

The movement for abolition calls for the massive police budgets to be redirected to things that people need. It also calls for more focus on de-escalating potentially dangerous confrontations rather than responding with force. The police have no other mechanisms to maintain their authority other than physical force which is why they are so apt to shoot someone in a mental health crisis rather than helping them.

This redirection of funds would be a welcome development but it runs into a complication. The police will not allow themselves to be distracted or weakened from serving their real purpose—to maintain class rule.

Under capitalism police are set above the average person in the social hierarchy. They are given huge salaries and impunity so that they see themselves as above society.

What is needed is a security force under democratic control of the mass of the society. This would necessitate the dismantling of class rule under capitalism.



These facts have not stopped the ballooning police budgets. Why is that?

## Bodies of armed men

The state is not some benign entity that can be rearranged to represent the interest of working people. Workers create the wealth that the ruling class controls. The working class and the ruling class have different interests. Historically the state arises to contain the conflict

were the slave catchers whose job it was to protect the 'property' of the slave owners. In the northern states, the police began as private security groups that protected the wealth of the rich.

In the Canadian state, the RCMP began as enforcers of colonial rule against First Nations people. This process has not ended as the militarized police raids on the Wet'suwet'en people has shown. The history of the brutal North

arms suppliers to Israel. These investments are worth billions to the biggest capitalists in the US—military contractors.

The police are, therefore, attacking the encampments because they are a threat to the profits of empire.

Mass protests and student encampments in solidarity with Palestine are also a threat to our ruling class because they expose the lies that the Israeli state is

# Zain Haq deportation temporarily halted

by: **Bradley Hughes**

Zain Haq is a Vancouver based climate activist who has been targeted by the Federal Government.

In June of 2022 Zain was imprisoned by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) who planned on keeping him in jail until they could get a removal order to deport him. Zain's "crime" was organizing and taking part in peaceful civil disobedience to save old growth forests in BC. The CBSA was hoping to use Zain's status as an international student against him. Fortunately the judge they went to ordered Zain's release, as did a second judge when CBSA imprisoned him again a few months later.

The CBSA nearly got their way. Zain was ordered to leave



the country on or before April 21 – Earth day! This was despite that his application for spousal sponsorship is still under consideration. Zain's supporters redoubled their efforts to keep him in Canada. A mass campaign of email and phone calls to the Minister of Immigration and local MPs was launched in the days before the deadline.

The campaign was success. Two days before his ordered departure date CBSA contacted Zain to tell him that his removal order has been deferred. This shows that public pressure can work.

We don't yet know if CBSA will resort to another attempt to deport Zain, or if the minister will intervene to grant him permanent residency status. You can find updates on [stopzainsdeportation.ca](http://stopzainsdeportation.ca) More action may be needed.

# Quebec nurses reject deal – la lutte continue

by: Chantal Sundaram

The last year has been tumultuous in the Quebec public sector labour movement.

After years of crisis that began even before the pandemic, all public services – but especially health and education – remain critically underfunded and understaffed.

The labour shortage is due to falling real wages, severe overwork, and the inability of front-line workers to meet public need, causing many more to quit. Nowhere has this been more clear than in Quebec's healthcare system, which is now being further ravaged by privatization.

And Quebec healthcare workers are only the latest to put their foot on the brake, following a massive uprising of public sector workers last November and December, when close to 18% of the entire population of Quebec was on strike, mostly women.

And now, almost 66,000 healthcare workers have told both their government employer and their own union that they've had enough, by massively rejecting a deal recommended to them.

## Quebec Common Front and health professionals

Last fall 420,000 members of the public sector-wide Common Front staged a series of short "warning" strikes, getting a deal as they approached a deadline for an unlimited general strike in the new year. They were joined by two other unions that were also negotiating with the Legault government.

One was Quebec's biggest nurses' union, the FIQ (Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec), with 80,000 members, including the majority of Quebec's nurses as well as nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, and clinical perfusionists (technicians who operate blood pumps during cardiac surgery). They staged eight days of strike last fall.

After the Common Front got its deal, the FIQ leadership kept negotiating. In April, the union recommended a deal to its membership, but

after several membership meetings and three days of voting, by midnight of April 12, the membership massively rejected the deal: 66,000, or 77% of the membership, cast their vote, and 61% voted to reject. In the east end of Montreal, the deal was rejected by 80% of FIQ members.

FIQ president Julie Bouchard expressed disappointment at the result but said the message was clear. And member posts on social media show anger over relocation of nurses and mandatory overtime.

## Flexibility and overtime

The deal's 17.4% salary increase over five years falls far short of keeping pace with inflation. But this isn't about money.

Throughout negotiations the government has been insisting on "mobility" and "flexibility" of nurses, and the fight over forced overtime due to short-staffing is far from new.

In 2018, when a nurse at the Gatineau Hospital in Hull was told she needed to stay after a 12-hour shift to work mandatory overtime—and responded she was too exhausted—eight of her coworkers held a two-hour on-the-job "sit-in" in solidarity. After a meeting with the union all nine nurses were sent home and no one did mandatory overtime.

In 2021, nurses across Quebec engaged in a mass refusal of overtime,

through the FIQ as a refusal of unsafe work. In a dozen regions including Montreal, 30,000 members refused extra hours for a weekend in October and issued a November deadline to ban the practice of forced overtime entirely or face further action.

The rejected deal states that mandatory overtime should only be used in emergencies. But what constitutes an "emergency" can become constant, as nurses have learned over years of never knowing when they will be allowed to go home – only worsened by the ravages of the pandemic.

And one of the issues that almost led to a breakdown in negotiations this past January was the nurse-patient ratio. A pre-pandemic viral Facebook post by a Quebec nurse coming off a shift in tears over the inability to help too many patients raised a public alarm. The situation has worsened since, and yet the FIQ deal only includes a promise to implement a realistic patient ratio gradually. In the meantime, the labour shortage will still mean more overtime or more "short-blanket" care.

## Pressure and the big picture

Though the FIQ leadership appeared shocked by the rejection of the deal, Bouchard said that the high voter

turnout shows that the membership remains mobilized. Talks began again on the night of Sunday April 14.

The FIQ is not excluding the possibility of more days of strike like the ones last fall. Following the rejection, Bouchard told a press conference, "We already had a strike mandate in our pocket to go as far as an unlimited general strike. If the 80,000 healthcare professionals tell us: we are ready to go that far, then we will use it."

But the FIQ leadership say plans for a general strike are not immediately on the table, because they want to engage in a consultation process with the members on where the deal falls short. But it may be difficult to narrow down the members' anger to only what can be easily settled in bargaining.

In December 2023, the Legault government adopted Bill 15, "An Act to make the health and social services system more effective." The Bill creates a provincial agency, Santé Québec, to oversee all activities related to public healthcare, including providing services and facilitating access. CAQ Health Minister Christian Dubé claims that this will allow people to access a medical specialist more quickly, but healthcare workers will experience "significant changes" which the government will have to explain.

The truth is, Bill 15 will allow even more privatization of Quebec's public healthcare system – but also, it pits healthcare workers against each other. Santé Québec becomes a single employer, merging unions and seniority lists, allowing staff to move from one region to another. The FIQ has maintained that the government wants to impose mandatory transfer/relocation on its members, while the government has maintained that transfer is voluntary.

Transfer of nurses literally amounts to rearranging deckchairs on the healthcare Titanic. It intentionally detracts attention from underfunding, and places the burden on staff who should be happy to move around. Worse, it is a divide and conquer strategy that invites an internal fight over seniority which has nothing to

do with why healthcare is in crisis in the first place.

The Quebec government has already made clear they don't intend to back down in the face of the FIQ members' rejection. Treasury Board President Sonia LeBel said on X: "the context and our goals will remain the same, in particular on the question of flexibility." Minister Dubé also reiterated that the government must forge ahead with the necessary changes to reform the healthcare network.

So, the FIQ leadership, and membership, should not delay. Consult away on what was wrong with this specific deal, but the big picture is more than clear. This mobilization of healthcare workers should not be squandered in challenging the dismantling of public healthcare.

## Nurses lead the way

The fight by Quebec nurses is yet more evidence of a growing willingness to fight back by workers in general. And nurses above all have been exposing the empty "frontline hero" lies of governments who only passed the burden of the pandemic onto the backs of those very frontline workers.

In Alberta and Ontario, rallies by nurses and health workers have led opposition to disastrous health care decisions by those provincial governments. Nurses in both Alberta and Manitoba have been in the forefront of fighting back against government public sector wage freezes, whether through legislation or informal interference in bargaining – including with the threat of job action. Even in Ontario, where nurses don't have the right to strike, they were a key part of opposition to the wage freeze imposed by Premier Ford's Bill 124.

The goal of privatization by stealth remains front and centre for the Quebec's CAQ government. The possibility of further strike action by nurses could not only win a better deal for members of the FIQ, but also strike a blow against the government's disastrous healthcare agenda.

The fight for public healthcare belongs both to those who need it, and those who provide it.



Nurses are the front line in the fight to save healthcare

# McGill academic workers rise up

"Even the sun's on strike today." That's what a McGill teaching assistant's picket sign read on April 8, the day of the eclipse.

On April 18, McGill University teaching assistants ratified a deal, ending a month-long strike that started March 25.

They were set to overlap with newly-unionized McGill law professors, who had issued a one-day warning strike on February 13 and announced an all-out strike if a deal was not reached by April 23. That strike began on April 24.

With the TAs, the main sticking point was salaries. In the end, the 1,600 members of the McGill grad student workers' local of the CSN, one of Quebec's main trade union

federations, got a 15.5% pay increase over four years and some guarantees of transparency on the allocation of TA budgets. The deal was ratified by only 75% which sends a signal that expectations were higher.

About 1000 courses were affected by the TA strike, and picketing was lively. The admin went to court to get a draconian injunction to limit picketing and got it – one that shamefully limited picket lines less than five metres from a campus entrance to only 10 people, with the



exception of the front gate where 100 people would be allowed to picket within a designated area. Picketers were ordered to not engage in any "physical or psychological intimidation." This only fueled determination, and the deal came a week later.

Enter AMPL, the union of law professors, negotiating down to their strike deadline. With no deal after 500 days of bargaining, they walked out on April 24, and picketing began in front of the Faculty of Law, on Peel St. at the corner of Docteur-Penfield Ave in Montreal.

Not only had their employ-

er stalled all this time, refusing to bargain, they even challenged the union certification through a judicial review. Said Richard Janda, the AMPL chief negotiator: "McGill's refusal to negotiate standard clauses that every other university has triggered this strike." Of course, real-wage declines are also at stake, better working conditions, and a single pension for all. Support immediately poured in from across Quebec and Canada for this small but mighty new union of 40 members.

Seeing McGill hit twice in one semester by strikes with such strong support almost rivals a total solar eclipse – whether you number 1,600 or 40.

# Imperialism and Palestine

*As the killing in Gaza and the West Bank threatens to spill over into a larger war, we look at why Israel is central to the project for US domination of the planet.*

The attack by the Israeli state on the Iranian embassy in Damascus ignited a series of response attacks by the Iranians and yet another much smaller attack by the Israelis. While cooler heads seem to have prevailed temporarily, there is still widespread concern that these attacks could spiral into a much larger conflict throughout the Middle East.

The spark that has set off these and many other regional escalations—the Houthis attacking US, UK and Israeli shipping in the Red Sea and the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict—is, of course, the genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

That massacre is causing a series of machinations throughout the region and within individual countries. As long as the Israelis insist on continuing the killing, the possibility of much wider conflict grows.

The main reason is that there are much larger forces at play—particularly US imperialism and its need to control the Middle East and central Asia.

Despite rumours that the Biden administration is unhappy with the way Israel is conducting the war on Gaza, the recent agreement to send tens of billions of dollars in military aid to Israel shows that it will take a lot more than a genocide to sever the ties between the US and its most reliable client state.

Why is that? The Israeli state exists to support the needs of the major western imperial powers. From its origins under the auspices of the UK government to recent support from the US, Israel is relied upon to be the outpost of the imperialists in the Middle East. As Biden himself said, “If Israel didn’t exist we would have to invent it.”

## Imperial rivalry

And we are in a context of deepening inter-imperial rivalry that has been growing as the US seeks to maintain itself as the only global superpower.

The US government sees threats to that global control everywhere. The Russians have a sizable military and control significant energy resources. They are seen as a threat to US dominance in Europe and Central Asia which is why the US has consistently encouraged NATO expansion around the Russian bor-

a danger to US control.

## US dominance

In the wake of the Second World War the US was the dominant power even though the former Eastern bloc was seen as a military rival.

That economic control has been declining relative to the global econ-

control over the globe.

There are real material consequences to this decline. The military and economic might of the US allows them to control everything from global trade rules to international shipping lanes to the resources of countries around the world. The fact that US multinationals are present in

they were agreed upon but because US economic and military power forced them onto states. Any country that breaks the rules that allow for US dominance is confronted with sanctions and economic warfare and in some cases military attack.

## Rivals consolidating

US imperialism is being increasingly challenged by emerging economies. They have in the last 15 years been consolidating their new power in the BRICS formation.

The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have been setting up their own international order. And they are growing. Crucially for the US, client states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have all joined the BRICS and there are another dozen countries that are trying to join.

The BRICS are running a parallel system of global economic control. This includes billions in cash for aid and development projects globally that used to be the purview of the IMF and World Bank which are controlled by the US and the EU.

The US and its partners in the G7 are watching as their exclusive grip on the global economy slips out of their hands. For the US and its allies like the UK and Canada, this is a real threat.

And the ability to coerce countries using “soft power” is now accelerating. There are many examples of how this is manifesting itself.

For example, the Russian invasion of Ukraine led the US to impose sanctions on countries that still traded with Russia. This was seen by many in the world—including US allies in the global south and even in Europe—as an overstep that allowed the US to effectively control the foreign policy of states.

That action has caused even more countries to try and find a way out of the US sphere of control. There is now a ready made alternative in the BRICS formation that can fill the gap.



Toronto protest against the genocide in Gaza

der and why it has sent billions in arms to Ukraine to try and wear down the Russian military.

China is an even larger threat as it closes in on being the largest economy in the world. China’s growth may have stabilized from the massive growth rates we saw in the 90’s and early 2000’s but it is still seen as

omy. In 1960 the US was responsible for 40% of global GDP and China represented only 4%. The Chinese economy has grown consistently and its share of global GDP has risen to almost 20% while the US share has declined to 25%.

For the US empire, this is a dangerous trend that can threaten their

most countries is a direct result of rules that the US has set in relation to market access.

This is why we hear so much from the US and allied governments like Canada about the “rules based international order”. That phrase is nothing but a euphemism. The rules of this order were set by the US not because

# “Arab, Jewish, Black and White, Workers of the World Unite!”

by: Carolyn Egan

Campuses across the US, and now in Canada, have experienced an eruption of student protests decrying Israel’s war on the Palestinian people. They are demanding an immediate cease fire and divestment of investments supporting the state of Israel. This harkens back to the anti-Viet Nam war protests of the 1960’s, and later the boycott campaign against the apartheid government of South Africa. They were both part of global movements which had significant impact on the politics of the times.

The occupations that are taking place today are being held outside in tent encampments, bringing attention to the horrific violence that we are seeing in Gaza. They are being met with police intervention and arrests as university officials demand that they leave campus even though they are enrolled at the universities and colleges in question. It is important to note that these occupations are made up of Palestinian and Jewish students along with their supporters. They are non-sectarian, denouncing anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism. Students have often been in the forefront of campaigns of this nature, and have had a real role in radicalizing young people around them.

Trade unions in Canada have taken strong positions, also calling for an immediate ceasefire, and in some instances to stop the shipment of weapons to the Israeli state.

Delegates at the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, the largest in Canada, voted strongly in favour of a motion that in part states:

“Whereas military equipment and components made in Canada, supplied and facilitated by export permits issued by the Canadian government, have been used by the Israeli military to carry out these attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, with \$28.5 million worth of permits issued in the first two months of the war in Gaza remain in effect:

Whereas Israel’s occupation of Palestine is, in effect, another

colonial occupation project ... Whereas working class opposition to Israel’s US backed war on the Palestinian people goes hand in hand with the labour movement’s motto that “an injury to one is an injury to all” as well as the call “Arab, Jewish, Black and White, Workers of the World Unite”:

Be it resolved that the Toronto and York Region Labour Council supports the call by the Palestinian trade unions for unions everywhere to take immediate action to stop the shipment of all that facilitates Israel’s US backed genocide against the people of Palestine; that we stand in solidarity with dock and transportation workers in Barcelona, Belgium, Italy and elsewhere who have refused to handle shipments for this war; and that we support and encourage similar workers actions here in Canada to stop the issuing of export permits and to prevent the shipment of any and all military components and equipment destined for Israel... We call for an immediate end to Israel’s bombing and ground assault in Gaza, for an end to Israel’s occupation of Gaza and the West Bank...”

Many local actions have been taking place such as the Ontario Federation of Labour’s demonstration at the office of Premier Doug Ford to protest the banning of wearing a Keffiyeh at the legislative building. The Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the National Union of Public and General Workers and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers which represent the vast majority of public sector workers in the country are calling on the Canadian government to immediately suspend the trade of arms and military equipment with Israel. Many other labour councils and unions have done the same.

As important as these statements are, unions must also follow the example of the students and come out into the streets in much larger contingents than we have seen to date. The organized working class must put its weight behind these words and strengthen the movement against the genocidal war in Gaza now!

The decline of the US is accelerating and the genocide in Gaza is just the latest reason. The US and its allies are losing any credibility they may have had as arbiters of global politics.

The claim to a higher standard for human rights and global freedom lies at the bottom of a pile of rubble made by US bombs. And there are further consequences to the position the US has taken in relation to the Israeli attacks. The attacks by the Houthis in Yemen against US, UK and Israeli shipping has caused global insurance companies to raise the rates for ships flying those flags while Chinese and Russian shipping has faced no such costs.

And so the attack on Gaza has become a fault line not just in the Middle East but across the globe. It is also creating a new series of conflicts between and within the regional powers

## Why is the region so important?

The Middle East has been a central focus of imperialists in the UK and US for a couple of main reasons. One is the vast oil reserves that are found throughout the area and the other is that it is located at the strategic crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia.

The US and Israelis see the bloc of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Yemen as part of a rival group in the region. Iran, with its close ties to Russia and China and its over hostility to the US is seen as the main

threat.

The problem for the US is that it is approaching its intervention in the region from a position of weakness. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan both ended in defeat and resulted in greater influence for Iran.

Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israel wants the US to help them take on both Hezbollah and Iran and is doing all it can to provoke both so as to force the US to join a larger war.

Both countries are now in a difficult situation as a consequence of this alliance.

Israel is not winning either militarily or politically and US credibility is being taken down with them.

## The movement for Palestine

The global movement against the genocide in Gaza is reshaping consciousness around the world rapidly. The movement is massive and spreading. The dividing line of Palestine is encompassing more than just this one fight.

All of this is coming within the context of the multiple crises of capitalism which existed before the attacks on Gaza began. Working people were already reeling from the cost of living crisis and the threat of global environmental collapse. This is sharpening the analysis of the system as a whole and is creating a

new and widespread revolutionary current.

The occupations at US campuses are mirroring the mass explosions of 1968 when the world erupted in protest against both the war in Vietnam but also against the whole rotten capitalist system.

We need to build this current wherever possible and build the kind of movements that can shatter the capitalist system.



They showed that even the largest military in the world can be defeated by committed resistance movements.

In that context, the US needs Israel to continue to be seen as a dominant regional power that can be relied upon to attack local states or resistance movements that threaten imperial interests.

This is why the US has so steadfastly supported the Israeli attack on

# Ellen Gabriel wins Grand Prix for her film *Kanatenhs: When The Pine Needles Fall*

by: **Deborah Murray**

Ellen Gabriel, documentarian, artist, human and environmental rights activist, Kanien'keháka from Kanehsatà:ke, recently won the Grand Prix, awarded each year to select artists by the Conseil des arts de Montréal. This year, for the first time in its 38 years of existence, the Conseil awarded the prize to an Indigenous artist.

This April, Ellen Gabriel was honoured for her documentary film *Kanatenhs: When The Pine Needles Fall* (2022), for which she is writer, producer, director, and narrator.

In 2023, the film won Best Canadian Short Film during the Festival international Présence autochtone (International First Peoples Festival), which notably started during the 1990 resistance. It has been nominated or awarded prizes at 30 festivals in a dozen countries.

The film opens on July 11 1990, the first day of a 78-day siege of Kanehsatà:ke, on the north shore of Montreal. We hear Ellen Gabriel begin the story of that day. Soon, we hear the sounds of SQ (Quebec's police force) gunfire as they storm barricades set up to stop a golf course and townhouse development from being built on Kanien'keháka land. The heart of the battle takes place in the Pines,



Onen'tókon, a forested area that includes a sacred Kanien'keháka burial ground.

As history has played out since the time covered in the film, we know that the RCMP and the Canadian army soon join the SQ to occupy Kanehsatà:ke.

In addition to footage from that first day, Gabriel includes her visual art, poetry, and personal photos.

*Kanatenhs: When The Pine Needles Fall*

sets out to correct the perspective of the time. Some of the most iconic images of Indigenous resistance have been of masked men wearing camouflage carrying rifles standing up to the police and army. In this film, Gabriel shines a light on the Kanien'keháka women who peacefully confront the police tactical squad on the first day of the conflict and leave a legacy for new generations engaging in Indigenous rights struggles.

In 1990, Ellen Gabriel became widely known when the People of the Longhouse and her community of Kanehsatà:ke chose her to be their spokesperson. And now, she has made this film:

"I wanted to reclaim the narrative that's been stolen from us and from our perspective of that first day," she said, lamenting how colonial narratives still swirl around 1990. (The Eastern Door, July 31 2023)

For over 45 years, Ellen Gabriel has fought on the frontlines of some of the most critical struggles of Indigenous people and their land in Quebec, across Canada, and internationally. She has become ally to others protesting the same unrelenting impacts of colonialism and imperialism. In recent struggles, Gabriel has allied herself with the Chinese community in Montreal to preserve their history, presence and the very fact of China Town. She has spoken in solidarity at many of the Montreal demonstrations of Palestinians fighting against genocide and for the return of their land.

*Kanatenhs: When The Pine Needles Fall* is a testament to the role the women of Kanehsatà:ke, the guardians of their land. The siege of Kanehsatà:ke still resonates today in no small part due to Ellen Gabriel and these women.

# 8 years and 14,000 dead - Safe supply now!

by: **Ben Ingoldsby**

14,000 people have been killed by the unregulated, toxic drug supply in British Columbia since the province declared a public health emergency on April 14, 2016.

2,511 people were killed in 2023 and 7 people a day are being killed right now.

This is not a crisis of addiction. This is a crisis of a toxic and unregulated drug supply that is killing indiscriminately, while being rubber stamped by the political wing of the ruling class. Government decisions that underpin prohibition, criminalization, and demonization mean that a truly accessible safe supply is being kept out of reach for most people who use drugs. These decisions, blithely signing off on ever increasing death, are possible because society teaches us that people who use drugs do not matter.

Illicit drugs in contemporary society symbolize the cruel and cold chaos that lurks just around the corner from each of us. They represent the extraordinary forces that seek to steal the individual autonomy that people are socialized to believe they have. That individual autonomy, that personal responsibility, that secular creed of individualism is what underwrites our current system of social and economic organization. These are values of liberal capitalism and the war on drugs has been undeniably successful at reaffirming so-

ciety's undying commitment to those values. The war on drugs is not, and never has been, a failure if it is understood as a tool being wielded to reinforce the guise that each person has individual freedom, and control over their destiny. Through the criminalization and othering of people who use drugs, a social order that benefits the power class is kept locked in place. The pervasive violence, dehumanization, and death are the consequences of that freedom and society is socialized to accept them.

## Systems of Oppression Serve the Ruling Class

Drug prohibition, the drug war, the climate crisis, the ongoing CRAB Park decampment here in Vancouver, the genocide in Palestine, are all examples of events linked together by oppressive systems that actively devalue human life to maintain the established order. Here in BC, Punjabi international students are being killed by drug overdoses at a rate that appears to greatly exceed the general population, but it is impossible to know at what rate exactly because the information is not officially tracked. International students are a group that are exploited for high tuition fees and then blamed for systemic shortages of housing. This past month the city of Vancouver and its armed enforcement squad have been clearing encampments in Crab Park, destroying people's

homes and communities. Many of these people are Indigenous, but all of these people are punished by the settler colonial mentality. All of these events are happening while a genocide that debases, devalues, and eliminates Palestinians is being carried out and justified in real time.

There are 225,000 people who tap into the



unregulated drug market in British Columbia each month. 7 of them are being killed every-

day. These are people from all walks of life and all levels of use, from first time to frequent. Drug users are all of us. British Columbia's current model of safe supply is entirely run through the medical system, and only about 4500 people are prescribed for each month. The number of prescriptions is decreasing as the right wing moral panic surrounding harm reduction and safe supply grows hotter.

The British Columbia decriminalization framework set drug threshold limits at 2.5 grams for cocaine, methamphetamine, and opioids. According to Amber Streukens of the Rural Empowered Drug Users Network, "this fails to meet the patterns of consumption...". Tyson Singh Kelsall, outreach social worker in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, has written elsewhere that "Ultimately, the provincial and federal government followed police advice when selecting the 2.5 gram limit of possession without charges." Police, the armed enforcers for the ruling class, and who have a vested interest in maintaining carceral violence and the war on drugs, had a greater say than people who use drugs.

The Drug User Liberation Front has called for the threshold limits to be immediately raised to 28 grams or for drugs to be completely legalized. The government, and the ruling class that controls it, have ignored them.

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# Portugal '74—When workers and soldiers fought for real power

Half a century ago millions took part in a revolution that brought down a brutal dictatorship and opened the possibility of fundamental socialist change. Dáire Cumiskey looks at the revolution and talks to author and historian Raquel Varela.

It's 50 years since a revolution swept Portugal, catapulting around three million people—a third of the entire population—into political activity, most for the first time.

Workers took over their factories. People transformed mansions into creches and cultural centres.

It showed revolution was possible in Europe and overthrew the fascist regime begun by António de Oliveira Salazar in 1932 and carried on under Marcelo Caetano after 1968.

This regime, known as Estado Novo (New State), opened up Portugal to foreign investors eager to take advantage of cheap, well-policed labour.

But Portugal's economy remained backward and its economic output per head was low compared with other European countries.

Discontent amongst the Portuguese people had steadily grown in opposition to those in charge, seeping even into the ranks of the army.

The Portuguese army was largely a conscript army, where the rulers sent young men to kill and to die in the colonies that were still part of a decaying empire.

The risings in Angola, central Africa, in 1961 temporarily destroyed Portuguese control in much of this colonial outpost.

But instead of pulling out, Portugal's rulers plunged into a doomed effort to regain full

domination.

Anti-colonial forces also fought back in Mozambique, south Africa, in 1964 and in Guinea Bissau in west Africa. Realising they were being sent to be slaughtered, disgruntled officers began to plan for resistance to the fascist regime.

A group of 400 officers, the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), overthrew the prime minister Caetano on 25 April 1974.

They removed 100 generals and general Antonio de Spínola became president despite playing no part in the coup.

The divisions and the tumult at the top opened the way for much more profound resistance that could offer real social change. Workers supported the armed forces' actions but then went further.

Workers occupied factories and joined enormous demonstrations. Some 260 families from a shantytown in the capital, Lisbon,

moved into an empty apartment block near the city. The military ordered them out but was forced to back down when the families refused.

The "Carnation revolution" underlined that the global revolutionary wave of 1968 was not finished and the methods of class struggle based on workers' power were not outdated.

The Portuguese events rekindled the hope that workers could transform the economy but also change themselves and challenge oppression in the course of the revolt.

During the month of May 1974, in a country of nine million, over 200,000 workers were on strike across key industries including shipbuilding, textiles, electronics, hotels, catering and banking.

The ruling class went from celebrating "freedom" from fascism to warning of the need to protect "democracy". By this they meant saving capitalism.

In September 1974, Spínola called on the "silent majority" to join a rally opposing the left.

It was set for 28 September—but workers organised a counter rally and it never took place.

Instead, at least 40,000 people protested in the centre of Lisbon, and soldiers defied orders to remove the barricades, joining them instead.

The revolution set up workers' and neighbourhood councils nearly everywhere. The ruling class found it impossible to contain the revolt for many months.

But crucially the main left forces—the social democrats and the Communists who were emerging from their underground organisation—held back the attempts to deepen the revolution further.

Revolutionary socialist Chris Harman said the left had been disarmed "because the workers looked to the armed forces to act for them, and inside the armed forces the rank and file looked to the progressive officers for a lead".

There was no going back to Caetano's regime. The colonies gained their independence and the ruling class put its hopes in a parliamentary democracy that could develop the economy and integrate more into Europe.

But long after Portugal's bosses were able to retake control, the memory of 1974-5 continues to haunt them and inspire workers.

## Raquel Varela— 'History of the revolution told from below matters'

*What does your book tell us about the mass participation in the revolution?*

I estimate that three million people were involved in the protests, strikes, and workplace occupations. At the time, around 600 workplaces were self-organised or were workers' cooperatives.

In the big factories, the workers' councils did not want to take ownership, but they did control how they functioned.

There was also land reform with cooperatives and workers management in hospitals, schools and across the public sector.

In schools teachers directly elected their representatives and they debated a new curriculum. Agreement was made that all children up to 16 years old should have the same quality of studies with a unitary education.

*How did workers take over the media during the revolution?*

Portugal had one of the greatest anarcho-syndicalist movements in the history of Western countries. Those in these movements were some of the most militant fighters, but often, their politics isolated them.

From the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century, there were more than 300 workers' newspapers. And one of them, called *The Battle*, had 25,000 copies printed each day.

Workers' councils during the revolution meant that newspapers were run amazingly democratically. I have studied this for a book I'm collaborating on, *The People's History of Portugal*, which has not yet been translated.

There was a moment when committed journalism was born during the revolution.

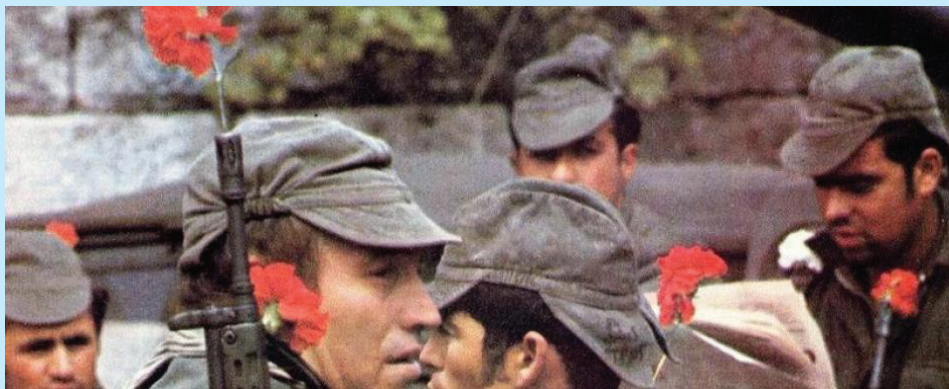
There were massive strikes among journalists and newspapers between 1974 and 1975.

But today, that journalism is totally destroyed. There are no workers' journals today, creating a massive crisis in that worker voices and debate is simply not heard in society.

*How did the revolution relate to the revolts for liberation in the colonies?*

The two struggles are absolutely connected. The anti-colonial revolutions started among the forced labour workers. Revolts prompted what the Portuguese state calls the Portuguese Colonial War in 1961.

The Portuguese state calls them colonial wars, but for us, they were anti-colonial rev-



olutions. A cotton worker strike in Angola led the Portuguese army to take revenge.

The Portuguese army used Napalm to kill Angolan people. After this the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola started the armed struggle. The same happened in Guinea Bissau and Mozambique.

Portuguese dock workers were fundamentally supportive of the liberation movements. The liberation movements and the army were

at a stalemate when the generals in the army organised the progressive coup.

They sought a political end to the fighting in the colonies that saw thousands of Portuguese men die in defence of a dying empire.

How did a military coup lead to workers' involvement on such a mass scale? When they organised the coup, middle-ranking army officers got messages out asking people to stay at home and wait.

They repeated ten times that they could arrest people if they were out and about. Despite these warnings, people began to go out to work.

Because there were no unions and no polit-

ical parties, there was no mediation between the state and the workers. The workers very spontaneously self-organised in thousands of workers councils and neighbourhood councils.

Immediately, these councils did away with the leaderships of the municipalities and the fascist unions, and the companies that were attached to the regime.

They began to self-organise society.

In my book I argue that we shouldn't view

the military coup and workers' self-organisation as two separate moments but one continual revolution that starts in 1961 and goes until 1975. It's all one single revolutionary process.

We have to look much further than mainstream understandings to assess the history of such a revolution. This is why a people's history is so important because its history is told from below.

A Marxist approach to history must consider the work of the working class. It's about studying the process, not just the results.

*After 1975, how did those in charge succeed in their counter revolution?*

Out of necessity the social democratic rulers that ushered in the counter revolution had to give many concessions to the workers.

The first thing the counter revolutionary forces destroyed were the soviets in the barracks, dismantling dual power in the army on 25 November 1975. Then, in 1978 and 1979, they removed the workers' councils. Later, in 1982, the land reforms was destroyed.

Lastly, in 1989, they began to privatise banks on a large scale that had previously been under workers' control.

All of this was only possible because the ruling class had worked hard to destroy the shipyard workers' organisation in a similar way to how Margaret Thatcher destroyed the miners in Britain.

They had been the vanguard of the revolution. It was a slow process to bring the working class to accept a neoliberal capitalist system made up of companies, the state and the union.

They had to destroy the more combative trade left wing trade unions, which were run by the rank and file and largely those who were influenced by the ideas of Maoism.

## Workers are fed up with cost of living increases - It's right to strike!

by: **Ritch Whyman**

**A**fter a short lull in strikes workers across the country have returned to the picket lines fighting to make up for wages lost to profit driven inflation and to cover Bay Streets interest rate hikes that have squeezed working class households for nearly 2 years.

Thousands of workers in key industries are in the midst of, or heading into negotiations. In many cases employers are digging in their heels and refusing to offer wages, pensions and benefits that make up for several years of below inflation wage increases.

In several key looming battles the federal Liberals under Trudeau will be tested on their commitment to "anti-scab" legislation for federal sector workers.

The Canadian Union of Postal workers have been at the table for nearly six months and have yet to submit a the required "notice of dispute" to start the over 2.5 month process to be in a legal strike position. The last postal strike saw the Trudeau liberals smash the strike with back to work legislation.

The over 1,000 members of CUPE local 375 at the Port of Montreal, who also had their strike broken by the NDP backed Trudeau government in 2021, are in position to issue the mandatory 72 hour notice prior to striking at anytime. A port

strike would cost employers up to \$100 million a week, yet the Maritime Employers Association is still seeking concessions from those who keep goods moving.

Thousands of members of the locomotive engineers section of Teamsters Canada are in bargaining with the mammoth rail monopolies of CN and CPKC fighting the ongoing push against safety protocols and quality of life requirements about time off in a workers home region. Again and again the federal Liberals have pushed back to work to undermine rail workers rights and supported the employers push to undermine rail

safety.

In Toronto, over 12,000 members of the Amalgamated Transit Union local 113 have voted overwhelmingly to authorize strike action against the Toronto Transit Commission. These workers kept the city moving throughout CoVID while senior managers and politicians stayed home. They are the same workers who's managers denied them the right to mask up at the start of the pandemic.

They only recently won a court victory overturning a provincial conservative party law that stripped them of their constitutional right

to strike. Now after years of forced settlements that left them losing wages to inflation they are preparing to shut the city down.

The media, bosses, Tories and Liberals will be doing everything they can to whip up a sentiment for breaking any strikes by these workers. They will paint these strikes as undermining the "economy", of driving inflation up, of being selfish. It will be vital for the whole of the labour movement to rally to their defense, not just in flowery words or tweets, but by mobilising members to build mass pickets in defiance of any back to work legislation.

Sadly the leaderships of most provincial federations of labour, national unions and the CLC have shown no appetite to build a mass workers fight over eroding living standards, and interest hikes from Trudeau and the bankers. They appear more interested in clinging to the sagging sails of the NDP pact with the hated cost of living crisis creator Trudeau. To get them to move will take rank and file members and local leaders demanding mass action to defend the right to strike.

It will take union leaders to stand up and knock aside nonsense about strikes harming the economy, by taking a stand like Shawn Fain of the UAW did and defending strikes as helping our, the the workers' economy, and yes harming their - the bosses', bankers', Galen Weston's, Keith Creel's, Trudeau's and Poilievre's economy.



## On May 30th, fight for health-care for all

by: **Michelle Robidoux**

**A**cross Ontario, health care workers and community campaigners are building actions to stop Doug Ford's dismantling of public healthcare.

On May 30th, the Ontario Health Coalition is organizing protests in Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. The coalition includes hundreds of member organizations, including the major healthcare unions, retiree organizations and community health coalitions.

These protests could not be more urgent. The Ford government has thrown hospitals into crisis through years of underfunding, wage suppression in the public sector, and enabling chronic violations of public healthcare laws.

This year alone, operating funding for public hospitals is increasing far below the rate of inflation, at 0.5%. At the same time, Ford has increased the funding for private, for-profit clinics by 212%.

Now, Ford is taking core hospital services such as surgeries and diagnostics and privatizing them. This is a key piece of his project of handing over healthcare to for-profit corporations.

The Conservatives claim that they need to increase the number of private clinics to reduce the backlog of surgeries. But as a joint initiative by surgeons at Sunnybrook and Michael Garron hospitals has shown, the number of surgeries performed can readily be increased by extending the use of operating rooms on evenings and

weekends - all within the public system.

Not only are private, for-profit clinics not needed to reduce surgery wait times - they

charge more per procedure than hospitals.

According to a recent CBC investigation, the Ford government is paying twice the cost for

surgeries in private, for-profit clinics than in public hospitals. For example, Don Mills Surgical Unit Ltd. is paid \$1,264 in public funds for cataract surgery, while a public hospital is paid \$508 for the same procedure.

Ford claimed that Ontarians will only ever need to use their OHIP (provincial insurance) card and not their credit card for healthcare. But mounting evidence shows that people are paying out of pocket - sometimes to the tune of thousands of dollars - for necessary medical care. User fees have been allowed to proliferate, and up-selling is already rampant at private clinics.

Instead of expanding services in our public hospitals to meet the needs of communities, Ford is handing over hundreds of millions of dollars to for-profit corporations to destroy health care. And it is the most vulnerable who will pay the price.

Ford is not alone in selling off public healthcare to corporations. Quebec recently named Genevieve Biron, a private healthcare services executive, to head up Santé Québec. Until 2021, Biron headed Biron Groupe Santé, a corporation specialized in private medical imaging and lab testing. They are literally handing over the running of public medicare to the private sector.

Capitalism is literally making us sick - and struggle is the cure for what is ailing public medicare. In your workplace, in your community, build the protest on May 30th.

For more info see: [stopforprofithealthcare.ca](http://stopforprofithealthcare.ca)

### THE FIGHT IS ON to save public health care

### Stop Doug Ford's privatization

