

Poilievre's reactionary Palestine position



By Adam Lee

With a handful of exceptions, odds are if you're living in the Canadian state, your local MP has been consistently awful on the question of Palestine.

Most members of Parliament have spent the last several months either remaining silent or actively supporting Israeli genocide. Many people on the left have justifiably lost any faith they had remaining in any politician's capacity to do the right thing and stand against genocide. There is justifiable anger at government MPs, who either supported Israel or took too long in coming around to show support for a ceasefire. Likewise, many have been frustrated with the NDP for lack of leadership on advocating for an arms embargo and ceasefire. While the NDP has supported these positions, it took the work of movements to get them there.

However, for all of the heat politicians are taking right now from the left, perhaps the most dangerous figure in Canadian politics has been largely uncontested up to this point: Pierre Poilievre, leader of the federal Conservative Party. With a federal election looming and Poilievre leading in the polls, the time is right for our movement to make sure we're putting pressure on *all* of our politicians—especially Poilievre.

Poilievre one of the worst on Palestine

Like many politicians, Poilievre has not been shy about his support for Israel: his record includes phrases like "Israel has the right to defend itself" and "Hamas is to blame," even as the Israeli state continues its genocide.

Where Poilievre truly distinguishes himself as a federal party leader is in his refusal to even try and hide his stance. He has not been shy about what the Canadian government's relationship to Israel would look like under his leadership. He has spoken at pro-Israel rallies. He touts himself as "a friend of Israel everywhere I go," has called Jewish people the "true" indigenous people of Palestine, and has doubled-down on the baseless accusation that UNRWA is a "terrorist" organization, pledging to cut funding once more if elected as Prime Minister. Under his watch, the federal Conservative party unanimously voted against the NDP's Palestine motion, which even Liberals who have spent months refusing to acknowledge the genocide voted for.

After watching Trudeau and the Liberals fumble on standing against genocide for months, it's hard to imagine that any leader or party could be worse on Palestine. But Poilievre knows no lows.

A wolf in sheep's clothing

For many of us on the left, Poilievre is almost too far right to even bother considering. What amount of action would change his mind on anything, much less Palestine? He stands against immigration, trans rights, raising the minimum wage, and every progressive issue under the sun. Arguing with people with politics like this is like arguing with a wall.

But what's dangerous about Poilievre is that even if we don't buy it, many workers across the Canadian state do. Poilievre has been able to capture the frustration with the cost of living crisis and the current Liberal government and channel it rightward. Unlike the NDP, Poilievre has positioned himself as the *de facto* alternative to Trudeau's Liberal government.

Poilievre knows how to *look* like he stands with workers, even as he sells us out. Last May, he was one of the few politicians who took the time to speak to the crowd of hundreds who gathered to protest the mass deportations of international students. His speech was a political-speak masterclass: he assured the crowd that he was pro-immigration and that he wanted to make sure those who came to Canada "the right way" have a right to stay here, stating his support for the international students facing deportation. Of course, what he left out is that he supports stronger immigration enforcement and border controls, while blaming housing shortages on immigrants (and not the commodification of housing, lack of rent control, etc.).

Poilievre knows how to garner support by talking to workers about the real issues that affect people's lives, blaming Trudeau and conveniently leaving out that his solutions to these issues involve big breaks for businesses and landlords. His act as a "friend of the working class" is working: the Conservatives are leading in the polls, and his aggressive courting of trade unions could widen the gap.

Don't let Poilievre catch the ones walking away

The Liberal-NDP supply and confidence agreement signed in 2022 has resulted in some modest reforms being passed and has forestalled an election until 2025. But it has also tied the NDP to the Liberals and prevented them from capturing the anger and frustration that people have with the

government—even as the NDP has moved to better positions on Palestine.

As everyday people turn away from those two parties, Poilievre and the Conservatives are waiting with open arms and a well-honed pitch that is winning workers to ruling class ideas.

We cannot take for granted that radicalizing moments will shift people leftwards; otherwise, the words and images of Palestinians alone would be enough to ensure that nobody would ever speak as boldly as Poilievre does about supporting Israel. Many of the people turning away from the centre/centre-left are going rightwards, into the hands of the man who vows to make life worse for Palestinians, queer folks, migrants, and workers across the Canadian state.

Our job as organizers is to keep building broad movements that create space for people who are outraged at what our politicians are doing, bring them in, and move towards a better world together. That means taking *all* of our failed leaders to task, including the man who wants to be the next one, Pierre Poilievre.

Author

Adam Lee (<https://springmag.ca/author/adam-lee>)

Adam Lee is a Spring member and community organizer in Tkaronto.

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Author

Adam Lee (<https://springmag.ca/author/adam-lee>)

Adam Lee is a Spring member and community organizer in Tkaronto.

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