

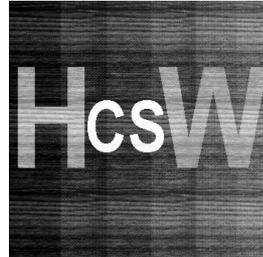
CANADA

STOP

ARMING

SAUDI ARABIA

This zine is a collaboration between Sonali Menezes, Labour Against the Arms Trade, and Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War. It is copy-left, which means you can make as many copies as you'd like and distribute this zine as you see fit!



This project was developed through Mayworks Festival of Working People & the Arts' Labour Arts Catalyst program. Mayworks Festival is an annual labour arts festival presenting projects that further our struggles for better working and living conditions. To learn more, please visit www.mayworks.ca.



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How the Conflict in Yemen Began

It was no accident the Saudi Arabian-led military intervention in Yemen was officially announced on March 25, 2015 at a press conference at the Saudi embassy in Washington DC. The media release declared the operation had begun at the request of Yemeni President-in-exile Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to attack his own homeland. In effect, the richest country in the Arab world launched a war against the poorest in the Arab world.

The intervention Hadi requested was to dislodge the Ansar Allah from Yemen's capital, Sana'a. Ansar Allah, a movement centred around the Houthi national minority in Yemen's north had seized the capital in a popular uprising against Hadi's pro-Saudi government in 2014. The Saudi ambassador further announced the KSA had cobbled together a coalition of nine regional states with which to prosecute its Operation Decisive Storm, that, according to the Saudi government would swiftly dislodge the Houthis.

But the real power behind the Saudi-led coalition was the US and its allies, including Canada. Operation Decisive Storm relied almost exclusively on US and Western military power to pound Yemeni civilian targets into rubble, bombing markets, water treatment facilities, mosques, villages and even weddings and funerals. The US, France, and the UK provided the weapons, ammunition, logistics, intelligence, training and reconnaissance, refueling, rescues for downed pilots, and even occasionally the boots on the ground, without which the Saudi-led coalition could not have functioned. Additionally, US and UK officers staffed the Saudi

command room in Riyadh. For its part, Canada exported light armoured vehicles and sniper rifles to Saudi Arabia. On top of all this, the US enabled the Coalition to maintain an illegal naval blockade on Yemen which prevented food, medical aid, and spare parts from reaching the population. The result was what the United Nations termed “among the world’s worst humanitarian crises.” Furthermore, lack of spare parts for Yemen’s fragile water purification and sewerage systems resulted in what was further termed, “the worst cholera crisis in history.” Finally, the blockade prevented Yemeni fishermen from pursuing their trade, which up to 2015, provided Yemen with its second greatest national product (after petroleum): seafood.

The result of the Saudi-led war in Yemen has been horrendous: 21.6 million (out of a prewar population of 28.5 million) people required humanitarian assistance in 2023. Approximately 377,000 Yemenis died prematurely, 150,000 killed in fighting, another 200,000 casualties due to malnutrition and disease. According to UNICEF, a child dies every ten minutes in Yemen due to a preventable illness. 4.3 million Yemenis have been internally displaced by the war. Another 1.7 million have fled the country.

Why would the US and its allies support such a brutal but distant military intervention continuing, after eight bloody years, with the Houthis still firmly in power in Sana’a? The answer is that it regards the Middle East as its “backyard” and intends to try to maintain its hegemony over the region at all costs. The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen was initiated under the Obama Administration which instigated new wars in the energy-rich region on Libya and Syria and carried on older Bush-era military operations against Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The US does not need West Asian petroleum for its own needs. Rather, it sought control over the flow of Mideast oil so that it could turn off or on the taps to the rest of the world. For this



reason, successive US administrations continued diplomatic cover for Saudi Arabia, as well as arms sales.

Yemen sits at the strategic Bab el Mendeb Strait, where about one-tenth of global seaborne petroleum trade passes each year. Whomever controls Yemen has a seat on the global chessboard over international trade. In addition, Yemen sits at a key point in the developing Chinese east-west trade project, known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Successive US administrations have regarded the BRI as a challenge to US domination of the global economy and have tried to stymie it, while the Ansar Allah movement has openly welcomed this “New Silk Road.”

Regrettably, the UN role in the conflict has been uneven. On the positive side, the Security Council (UNSC) has neither approved of the US/Saudi military intervention, nor has it given permission for the Saudi Coalition to place a

comprehensive economic blockade on Yemen. For this reason, the war and blockade of Yemen are illegal under international law. On the other hand, based on UNSC resolution 2616, composed by the UK delegation, the Security Council recognized the Hadi government as Yemen’s legitimate government, called for Ansar Allah to vacate Sana’a, and imposed an arms embargo on it. Further resolutions imposed sanctions against Houthis and termed Ansar Allah a terrorist organization.

Recently, evidence of a shift in the balance of power in West Asia took place when the People’s Republic of China and Oman brokered talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, previously at odds over the war in Yemen, that resulted in their resumption of diplomatic relations. This shift holds the promise of an eventual end to the conflict.

However, promising developments have appeared previously during the Yemeni conflict which didn’t come to fruition. Therefore, in light of the terrible suffering in Yemen today, not to mention the abuse of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and lack of respect for the right of self-determination of its people, it behooves us all to press for a speedy end to the war and to Canada’s complicity in it.

- Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

This article is an abridged version of a longer piece which can be found at: <http://hamiltoncoalitiontostopthewar.ca/zine1/>





An Interview with Simon Black, lead organizer with Labour Against the Arms Trade

Can you tell me a little bit about labour against the arms trade?

Labour Against the Arms Trade (LAAT) is a grassroots coalition of peace and labour activists working to bring an end to Canada's participation in the international arms trade. We organize for arms conversion—that is, the conversion of arms industries into socially-useful production—and for a just transition for arms industry workers. The arms trade fuels wars and armed violence, supports repressive and authoritarian regimes, diverts scarce resources from human needs, and has a devastating impact on human rights and human security. Canadian-made weaponry and other 'security' equipment has been deployed to repress workers' movements, in Colombia for example; used in brutal wars, such as in Yemen; and to maintain a regime of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

The estimated value of the international arms trade is over \$100 billion annually. The UN World Food Program estimates that it would take less than half of that—\$40 billion each year—to end world hunger by 2030. The big threats to human security, such as climate change and economic inequality, are not military in nature. We need a new approach to human security that centers decent work, international solidarity, and social justice.

What role have workers and unions played historically in the anti-war movement in Canada?

There's a long tradition of labour movement opposition to the arms industry and to unjust wars. For example, labour played a crucial role in keeping Canada out of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Workers organized through local groups like Trade Unionists Against the War (TUAW), a coalition made up of labour leaders and rank-and-file activists from a number of unions across sectors. In the early 1980s, the president of the Canadian branch of the United Auto Workers union, Bob White, rallied labour movement opposition to cruise missile testing in western Canada. Going back even further, unions played an important role in organizing and mobilizing Canadian opposition to the Vietnam War.

But the role of workers in their workplaces, at the point of production, and not just in the streets, is important. Take the Iraq war: Yes, Canada officially stayed out due to public opposition to the war, but Canadian companies made the guidance systems for cruise missiles the US military was reliant on. So labour opposition to war cannot just be in the streets. We want workers to understand the power they have in their workplaces to throw sand in the gears of the war machine.

I think what makes LAAT unique from other anti-war organizations is that you're organizing within the labour movement. Can you speak to this form of organizing and what you've been able to accomplish within the labour movement?

Since the mobilization against the US-led invasion of Iraq, anti-war organizing in the labour movement has been in decline. LAAT is trying to reverse that. It is working-class

people, not the rich, who fight and die in wars, and labour is the source of all wealth, including in the arms industry. And that means workers in this sector have a great deal of power, including the power to demand and build alternatives.

In our campaign to end arms exports to Saudi Arabia, we have worked with unions to raise awareness of the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, which has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and contributed to what the UN called one of the "world's worst humanitarian crises." When we began our work, not a single union or labour federation had taken a public stand against arms exports to Saudi. Today, we count the Canadian Labour Congress and most major public and private sector unions in Canada and Quebec among the civil society organizations who have demanded an end to these exports and a just transition for arms industry workers.

What is the situation with workers in London, ON as it is related to the war in Yemen?

The bulk of Canadian arms exports to Saudi Arabia are light armoured vehicles (LAVs), which are manufactured in London, Ontario, at General Dynamics Land Systems Canada (GDLS), a subsidiary of US-based defense contractor, General Dynamics. The workers at GDLS are unionized, members of Local 27, Unit 66 of Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union. But the LAVs have been shipped to port by unionized rail workers and component parts have been offloaded in the Port of Montreal by unionized dock workers.

The Saudi government has deployed these LAVs in the war in Yemen and also to crush dissent, both internally and in neighboring Bahrain. Saudi Arabia is also one of the worst countries in the world for workers' rights. Workers should

oppose these exports on principle, but workers also need to survive, feed their families and so on.

Unifor members at GDLS are highly-skilled and could be making any manner of products we need to confront the climate crisis, such as high speed rail cars, search and rescue vehicles needed in climate disasters, or green technologies. If you ask workers: “If you were to be paid the same wage, same benefits, and have the same security of employment, would you rather be manufacturing socially-useful products or weapons destined for one of the world’s worst human rights violators?” Not a single worker will tell you they prefer to be making weapons of war. But workers don’t have the choice, and it’s that choice that we fight for.

What do you mean when you say ‘Just Transition,’ and what does that look like for arms manufacturing in Canada?

When we speak of the climate crisis, a just transition means moving to a greener, low-carbon economy in a way that is fair and inclusive to workers and their communities, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no worker behind.

But we also face a crisis of militarism: governments are spending excessive financial, technological, and human resources on their militaries, diverting resources from the meeting of human needs, like housing, healthcare, and education. The arms industry absorbs vast amounts of funds that could otherwise be spent on human security. So we need a dual transition: away from militarism and away from fossil fuels. A just transition for arms industry workers puts their needs, and those of their communities, at the center of any transition to socially-useful production. We cannot build a more peaceful, green economy if we don’t have the support of workers and their unions in the arms and fossil-fuel industries.

Are there any Canadian arms deals that you have your eye on at the moment?

There is an arms deal in the works between GDLS and Qatar to supply LAVs to the Qatari armed forces. The Government of Canada is lobbying Qatar on behalf of GDLS. Like Saudi Arabia, Qatar is one of the worst countries in the world for workers’ rights, especially migrant workers’ rights. Canada continues to sell to, and buy arms from, the State of Israel. Palestinian unions have called for labour elsewhere to demand a two-way arms embargo on Israel and we continue to work with Labour 4 Palestine on the #StopArmingApartheid campaign.

What advice would you give to workers of all ages, but especially young workers who would like to be involved in this work?

You have tremendous power to change this world for the better when you act collectively with other workers. If you don’t have a union, organize one. If you’re in a union, organize for a greener, more peaceful economy by joining LAAT.



A Brief Timeline on the Yemen War and Canada's Role

February 2014 – Canada's Conservative government announces a 14-year, \$15 billion-dollar deal for the export of hundreds of light armoured vehicles (LAVs) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The LAVs are to be manufactured by General Dynamics Land Systems in London, Ontario. Prime Minister Stephen Harper praises the deal, the largest in Canadian history.

December 2014 – Yemen's civil war begins.

March 2015 – Saudi Arabian-led, US-backed coalition begins a bombing campaign in Yemen and imposes a naval blockade.

October 2015 – The Liberal Party of Canada forms a majority government under the leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

April 2016 – Coalition of civil society organizations sends an open letter to PM Justin Trudeau expressing profound concerns about Canadian arms exports to Saudi Arabia. It is the first of five open letters to be sent to the PM between 2016 and 2021.

October 2016 – Airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition hits a crowded funeral in Sanaa, killing at least 140 mourners.

Early 2017 – Canadian LAV exports to Saudi Arabia begin under the 2014 deal.

April 2018 – United Nations declares Yemen war to be "the world's worst humanitarian crisis" with more than 22 million Yemenis in need of humanitarian assistance.

August 2018 – Airstrike by Saudi-led coalition hits a school bus in a crowded market in Dahyan, Yemen, killing 40 children and wounding 77 people.

December 2018 – Peace activists picket the entrance to the Port of Saint John, New Brunswick, as Saudi ship is due to pick up LAVs. Dockworkers, members of International Longshoremen's Association Local 273, refuse to cross the picket line. The ship remains offshore for the day due to "bad weather" according to port officials.

October 2019 – Labour Against the Arms Trade (LAAT) and peace activists stage a die-in at then Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland's Toronto office.

June 2020 – First pan-Canadian day of action against arms exports to Saudi Arabia. LAAT joins coalition of civil society organizations calling for an end to arms exports to Saudi and for a just transition for arms industry workers. Demonstrations take place in cities across Canada and outside General Dynamics in London. Day of action is endorsed by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the largest labour organization in Canada.

September 2020 – Canada is publicly named by a United Nations panel of independent experts as one of the countries helping fuel the war in Yemen with arms sales to Saudi.

September 2020 – Second pan-Canadian day of action against arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

January 2021 – Activists with LAAT, Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War, and World Beyond War block trucks at Hamilton-area transport company linked to Saudi arms shipments.

March 2021 – Activists protesting arms exports to Saudi block a railway line near General Dynamics in London, Ontario.

September 2021 – For the second year in a row Canada is named by a panel of UN independent experts as one of the countries helping fuel the war in Yemen.

December 2021 – Coalition of civil society organizations send fifth open letter to the PM reiterating opposition to arms exports to Saudi and support for a just transition for arms industry workers. Letter is signed by close to 70 organizations, including many public and private sector trade unions, and the Canadian Labour Congress.

March 2022 – Third pan-Canadian day of action against arms exports to Saudi. Activists with World Beyond War and LAAT drop banner reading “Blood on Your Hands” from Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland’s Toronto office.

April 2022 - UN-brokered truce in Yemen comes into effect.

March 2023 – Fourth pan-Canadian day of action against arms exports to Saudi to mark 8th anniversary of war in Yemen. Over 350,000 Yemeni people have died of violence and hunger in eight years of war. More than 11,000 children have been killed or maimed in the conflict, according to a UN estimate.

- Labour Against the Arms Trade

Canada’s Complicity in the Yemen War

Ever since the Harper government’s 2014 announcement that it had authorized the largest arms sale in Canadian history, the deal has generated justifiable indignation among Canadians. That sale, worth \$15b. CAD, with General Dynamics of London, ON, was to provide and service a large fleet of light armoured vehicles (LAV’s) for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The details were deliberately shrouded in secrecy, partly at the request of the Saudi government and partly because of the Kingdom’s dismal human rights record. The Harper government feared pushback from Canadian human rights and peace organizations, as well as parliamentary opposition, that the LAVs would be used in human rights violations inside and outside the Gulf kingdom. In fact, the Saudis deployed Canadian-made LAVs to support Bahrain’s monarch in brutally putting down peaceful pro-democracy protests in 2011.

The deal became a campaign issue during the 2015 federal election, during which Justin Trudeau promised to scrap it until the week before the vote, when he changed his tune to “study the deal.” Once elected, the Trudeau government moved expeditiously to approve the first export permits for LAVs in the spring of 2016.

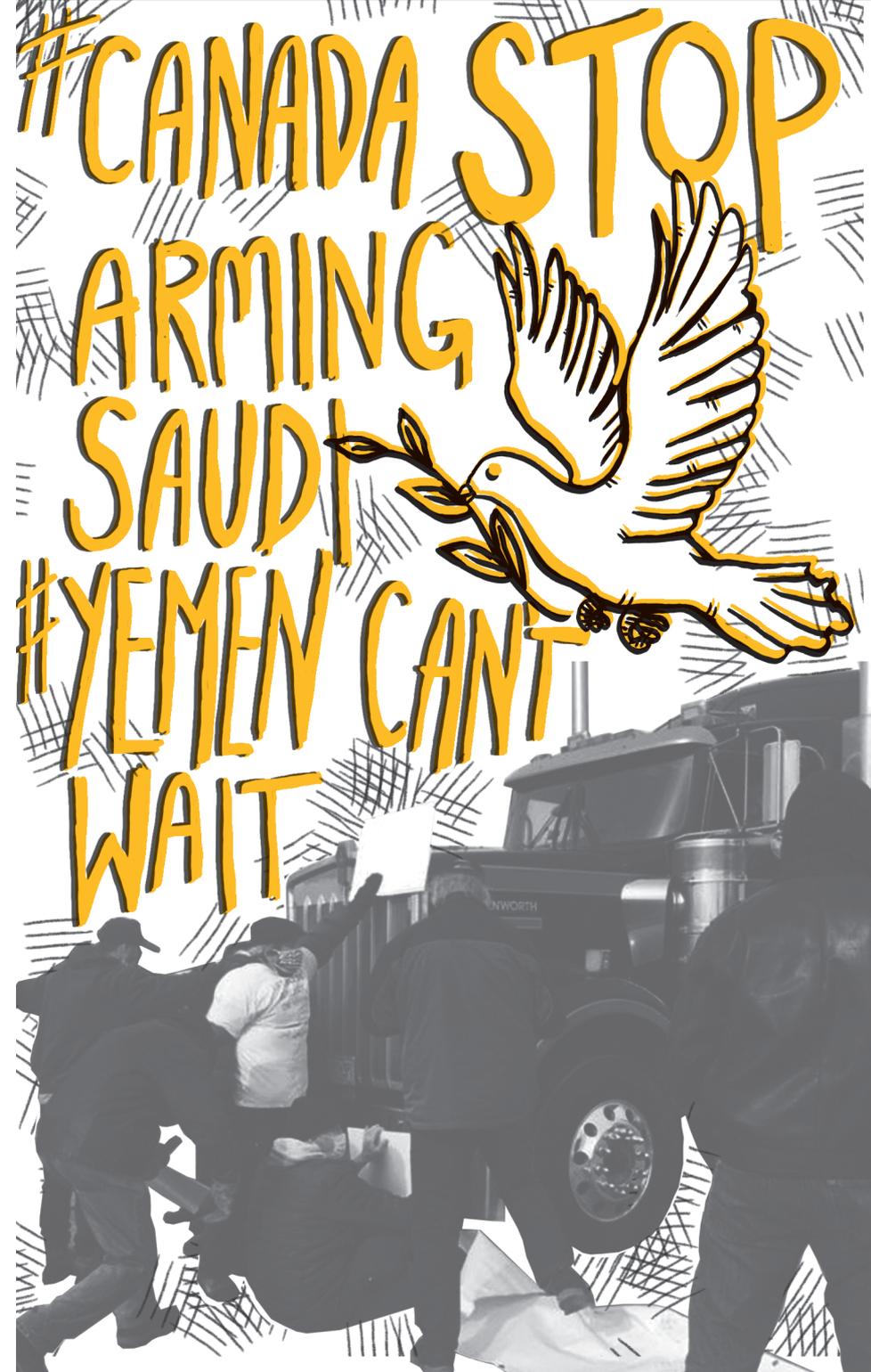
However, facing increasing domestic criticism over the humanitarian crisis in Yemen in which his government was clearly complicit, Trudeau temporarily suspended existing permits for the sale of Canadian-made Terradyne “Gurkha” armoured vehicles after photos appeared on social media in Canada showing they had been used to quell anti-government protests by Saudi Arabia’s Shi’a minority. That suspension ended

with Trudeau claiming that the penalty for terminating the contract would cost billions and his foreign minister, Chrystia Freeland adding, “...*We can all understand... the fundamental importance of being able to trust Canada.*”

Following the brutal murder of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018, several European countries terminated arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the Trudeau government temporarily froze new export permits and undertook a review of its own sales. However, in 2020, the government published its final report claiming there was “no substantial risk” that Canadian weapons would be used for human rights violations. It then not only ended its freeze on sales to Saudi, but doubled down on arms sales to the Kingdom, approving sales of Canadian sniper rifles and explosives. Moreover, the government began issuing brokering permits for selling them arms through other countries such as Brazil, Holland, and the USA.

But popular resistance in Canada only increased. In 2020, peace groups in Canada came together to found the Canada-Wide Peace and Justice Movement (CWPJN) which, as its very first action, organized a Canada-wide day of action on March 26, the sixth anniversary of the war. That success was followed by a Global Day of Action in solidarity with Yemen on January 25, 2021. It featured more than 300 organizations in 17 countries. In Canada, the CWPJN organized actions in Montreal, Nova Scotia, and Vancouver. These included a sit-down blocking trucks outside of Paddock Transportation, a Hamilton-area trucking company involved in the shipping of LAVs to Saudi Arabia.

On August 21, 2021, Amnesty International Canada and Project Ploughshares issued a joint report entitled, “*No Credible Evidence: Canada’s Flawed Analysis of*



Arms Exports to Saudi Arabia” which noted that “... weapons exported from Canada to Saudi Arabia... risk being diverted for use in the war in Yemen. Reports... illustrate that the Saudi-led coalition’s participation... has contributed to gender-based violence, forced displacement, and indiscriminate attacks against civilians.”

On December 13 of that year, a coalition of over 50 civil society organizations, including the Canadian Labour Congress, sent their fifth open letter calling on the Liberal government to end arms exports to Saudi Arabia and work with unions to ensure a just transition for arms industry workers.

In 2016, half of Canadians polled by the Angus Reid Institute disagreed with the Trudeau government sticking with the Saudi arms deal. By 2017, 64% of Canadians indicated that they opposed the deal. In 2018, a full 90% of Canadian respondents were in agreement that there should be no future arms deals made between the two countries.

The Canada-Wide Peace and Justice Network continued to harness popular opposition to the Saudi arms deal. In 2022, it organized a #CanadaStopArmingSaudi weekend of action from March 26-27. Actions took place in Hamilton, Toronto, Waterloo, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Montreal, including a social media campaign, webinar, and parliamentary petition. Similarly, on March 25-27, 2023, it held a weekend of action which included rallies in six Canadian cities, to mark the eighth anniversary of the war. In its statement, the Network called for the following:

- *Cancel active and pending sales of Canadian arms (light armored vehicles and other weapons) to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.*
- *Call on the Saudi-led coalition to end its illegal military offensive.*
- *Call on the Saudi-led coalition to fully lift the land, sea, and air blockade on Yemen.*
- *Open unconditionally the door to all Yemeni refugees under the same terms as has been done for Ukrainian refugees.*
- *Increase humanitarian aid to Yemen to an amount that will be meaningful given the scale of misery and destruction that Yemenis have suffered in this eight-year war. After the Canadian government cancels the \$15 billion LAV sale, they must donate the refunded amount (after penalties) for humanitarian aid in Yemen.*

Clearly, Canadians should do more to pressure the Trudeau government to suspend the current contract with the Saudi government and not negotiate any further arms sales with any of the Saudi Coalition partners until they end their brutal and illegal war in Yemen.

- Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

This article is an abridged version of a longer piece which can be found at: <http://hamiltoncoalitiontostopthewar.ca/zine2/>



ABOUT US / GET INVOLVED

Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

Established in 2002 to oppose the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, our Coalition was provided with the impetus for many new campaigns by the U.S. “War on Terror” and its new cold wars with Russia and China. We are a member organization of the Canada-Wide Peace and Justice Network. Join us!

website: hcsww.ca

contact: hcsww@cogeco.ca

Instagram: [hamilton_hcsww](https://www.instagram.com/hamilton_hcsww)

Labour Against the Arms Trade

Want to build an anti-war voice inside the labour movement? Join Labour Against the Arms Trade, a coalition of peace and labour activists working to end Canada’s complicity in the international arms trade.

www.facebook.com/LAATCanada

Twitter: [@LAATCanada](https://twitter.com/LAATCanada)

Sonali Menezes is an artist and writer based in Hamilton, ON. She loves the way zines take art off the white walls of galleries and puts it directly into working people’s hands.

Find more of her work here: www.sonali-menezes.com

Follow her on instagram [@sonaleeeeeee](https://www.instagram.com/sonaleeeeeee)

Make zines with her [@zineclubhamont](https://www.instagram.com/zineclubhamont)

What’s Happening in the images on Page ____??

Zine Cover and Page 7: The light armoured vehicles depicted are the same LAVs manufactured in London, ON at General Dynamics Land Systems Canada (GDLS), a subsidiary of US-based defense contractor, General Dynamics.

Page 4: The aircrafts depicted are Calidus B-250 light attack aircrafts, procured by the United Arab Emirates, integrated with Pratt & Whitney Canada PT-6A-68 turboprop engine and Canadian-made Wescam CMX-15D targeting system.

Page 5: In March 2023 protesters in Toronto affixed a 30-foot message to Global Affairs Canada’s office. Covered in bloody handprints, the message read “Global Affairs Canada: Stop Arming Saudi Arabia”

Page 15: In march 2021 activists protesting arms exports to Saudi block a railway line near General Dynamics in London, Ontario.

Page 18: in January 2021 Activists with LAAT, Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War, and World Beyond War block trucks at Hamilton-area transport company linked to Saudi arms shipments.

2023



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