

OPEN LETTER

Migrants Have the Right to Protest Without Fear

TO

Prime Minister Mark Carney
Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree
Immigration Minister Lena Metlege Diab
Alberta Premier Danielle Smith

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, are deeply alarmed by the actions of Calgary Police and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at a protest by international graduates in Calgary on August 12, 2026.

Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are fundamental Charter-protected rights. They do not belong only to Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Migrants must be able to speak out, organize and protest without those activities becoming a pathway to immigration enforcement.

A migrant worker standing on a picket line must be able to speak out against their employer. An international student must be able to protest government policy. Refugees and undocumented people must be able to attend rallies, organize in their communities and criticize those in power. Immigration enforcement cannot be the price of participating in public life.

At least 1,500 Portage College students completed programs that were eligible for post graduate work permits when they enrolled. After they had completed their studies, in June 2026, Immigration Canada introduced a new rule excluding so-called "non-credit" programs to deny their applications. As a result, they began a round-the-clock protest on July 17 in Calgary and Edmonton.

On August 12, Calgary Police entered the protest site reportedly over access to a sidewalk. Police then asked CBSA to verify the immigration status of four people. CBSA subsequently arrived, checked 20 protesters and referred 12 for further investigation. Ten of them have since received exclusion orders and face deportation. These students also have Federal Court challenges underway and are pursuing available legal processes to restore their status and obtain new study permits.

When police and immigration enforcement collect information from people exercising their democratic rights and use it for immigration enforcement, it creates a chilling effect far beyond the individuals involved. These actions are happening amid already growing fear in immigrant communities, with deportations at their highest level in more than a decade and new powers under Bill C-12 allowing the government to cancel or suspend immigration documents and application processing. Migrants across the country are being told that joining the next protest, picket line or public meeting could put their ability to remain in Canada at risk.

We have all watched in horror as immigration enforcement in the United States has been used against immigrants engaged in political expression. Canada must not go down that road. The events of August 12 must never be repeated.

We call on the federal government and the government of Alberta to take immediate action including:

1. Clear public policies ensuring that participation in peaceful protests, picket lines and other protected political activity does not result in immigration enforcement.
2. An independent investigation into Calgary Police and CBSA's actions on August 12, with public findings and accountability for any wrongdoing.
3. Immediate suspension of the exclusion orders and any removal action arising from the August 12 enforcement while these events are investigated.
4. Resolution to the fundamental injustice that brought these students into the streets by exempting them from the retroactive application of the new PGWP eligibility rules and assessing them under the rules in place when they enrolled.

SIGNED,

Signatories

350.org, Canada

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Canada

Amnesty International Canada (English-Speaking), Canada

BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Canada

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), Canada

Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), Canada

Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, Canada

Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC), Canada

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, Canada

Climate Action Network – Réseau action climat Canada, Canada

Council of Canadians, Canada

Greenpeace Canada, Canada

Just Peace Advocates, Canada

KAIROS Canada, Canada

Migrant Rights Network, Canada

Science for the People Canada, Canada

Stand.earth, Canada

The United Church of Canada, Canada

Wilderness Committee, Canada

50by30Niagara, Ontario

Afar Community in Toronto, Ontario

Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Ontario

Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network, Atlantic Canada

Bathurst United Church, Ontario

BC Policy Solutions, British Columbia

BIRD - Bioinformatique, Recherche et Données, Quebec

8th Fire Rising, Canada

Alternatives, Canada

Amnistie internationale Canada francophone, Canada

Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Canada

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canada

Canadian Council for Refugees, Canada

Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, Canada

Canadian Union of Public Employees, Canada

Centre for Free Expression, Canada

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists - Canada, Canada

For Our Kids, Canada

HIV Legal Network, Canada

Justice for Migrant Workers, Canada

Leadnow, Canada

National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), Canada

Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!), Canada

The Shift, Canada

The United Jewish People's Order Canada, Canada

230 Fightback, Ontario

Aamjiwnaang & Sarnia Against Pipelines (ASAP), Ontario

AGIR Montréal (Action LGBTQIA+ avec les immigrantEs et réfugiéEs), Quebec

Artists for Climate & Migrant Justice and Indigenous Sovereignty, Ontario

Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS), Ontario

BC Employment Standards Coalition, British Columbia

BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, British Columbia

Bridges Not Borders - Créons des ponts, Quebec

Bruce R. Allen Paralegal, Ontario

CALACS de l'Est du BSL, Quebec

Canada-Philippines Solidarity Organization, Ontario

Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, Ontario

Canadian Forum for Human Rights and Democracy in India (CFHRDI), Canada

Canadian Muslims for Environmental Stewardship, Canada

Canadians for Indian Democracy (CID), Canada

Centre des femmes d'ici et d'ailleurs, Quebec

Childhood Arrivals Support and Advocacy Centre of Canada, Canada

Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, Ontario

Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada, Canada

Climate Justice Montreal, Quebec

Coalition Against Bigotry - Pacific, British Columbia

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, British Columbia

Common Frontiers, Canada

Community Legal Clinic- Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk, Ontario

Community Peacemaker Teams, Canada

Conscience Canada, Canada

Cooper Institute, Prince Edward Island

Council of Canadians, Avalon/NL Chapter, Newfoundland and Labrador

Council of Canadians, London Chapter, Ontario

Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society, British Columbia

CUPE Ontario, Ontario

Decolonial Solidarity, Canada

DIGNIDAD MIGRANTE Society (La DIGNIDAD), British Columbia

Dogwood, British Columbia

Executive Committee of the Graduate Student Society at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia

Family Service Toronto, Ontario

Fédération des femmes du Québec, Quebec

Finding Order in Disorder Foundation, Ontario

Friends of Chinatown Toronto, Ontario

from the river to the sea collective, Canada

Ghanaian-Canadian Association of BC, British Columbia

Grand RiverKeeper Labrador, Newfoundland and Labrador

Green 13, Ontario

Green Wave West, Ontario

Groupe de Recherche et de Formation sur la Pauvreté au Québec, Quebec

Guelph Community Acupuncture, Ontario

Harrogate Psychological Services, Alberta

HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, Ontario

HRM Chapter of The Council of Canadians, Nova Scotia

IJV-TO/YR, Ontario

Butterfly- Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network, Ontario

Calgary Anti-Racist Action, Alberta

Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, Canada

Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, Ontario

Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association, Canada

Canadian Union of Labour Employees (CULE), Canada

Caregiver Connections, Education and Support Organization (CCESO), Ontario

Centre des travailleurs et travailleuses immigrants, Quebec

Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Ontario

Citizens for Public Justice, Canada

Clayoquot Action, British Columbia

Climate Justice Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Coalition Haitienne au Canada contre la dictature en Haiti (CHCD)H, Quebec

Collectif d'action et de lutte contre le racisme, Quebec

Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), Canada

Community Legal Services of Ottawa/Services juridiques communautaires d'Ottawa, Ontario

Concertation de luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, Quebec

Conseil central du Montréal Métropolitain-CSN, Quebec

Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, Canada

Council of Canadians, Calgary Chapter, Alberta

Council of Canadians, South Okanagan Chapter, British Columbia

Criminalization and Punishment Education Project, Ontario

CUPW Local 602, Ontario

Department of Imaginary Affairs, Canada

Diversity Thunder Bay, Ontario

Durham Region Labour Council, Ontario

FAM (Familia Migrante Latino), Alberta

FCJ Refugee Centre, Ontario

Femmes de diverses origines-Women of Diverse Origins, Quebec

Friends of Africa Development Foundation (FAD Foundation), Canada

Friends of Medicare, Alberta

Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), Quebec

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women Canada, Canada

Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet (GASP), Ontario

Green Majority, Canada

Grey Highlands Climate Action Group, Ontario

Grow Women Leaders, Canada

Halifax Workers' Action Centre, Nova Scotia

Healthcare For All Coalition, Ontario

HOMA, Quebec

IAVGO Community Legal Clinic, Ontario

IJV-Winnipeg, Manitoba

Independent Jewish Voices – Calgary, Alberta
 Independent Jewish Voices Canada, Canada
 Injured Workers Action for Justice, Ontario
 International Socialists, Canada
 Iraqi Federation of Refugees, Canada

 IslamicFamily, Alberta
 Jane Finch Action Against Poverty, Ontario

 Justice for Workers Guelph, Ontario
 L'Observatoire pour la justice migrante, Quebec
 Labour Community Services of Peel, Ontario
 LAL, Ontario
 Law Office of M. K. Anderson, Ontario
 Legal Assistance of Windsor, Ontario
 Ligue des droits et libertés, Quebec
 Madhu Verma Migrant Justice Centre, New Brunswick
 Migrant Students United Vancouver, British Columbia
 Migrant Workers Centre BC, British Columbia
 Montreal City Mission, Quebec
 Neighbours for Palestine Waterloo, Ontario
 NIAGARA AFRICAN CARIBBEAN CULTURE ORG., Ontario
 Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association, Ontario
 No Cuts to Care Coalition, Canada
 Nonviolence International Canada, Canada
 OCAD Student Union, Ontario

 Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE (OCHU/CUPE), Ontario
 Oxford Coalition for Social Justice, Ontario
 Palestinian and Jewish Unity, Quebec
 Patchwork Ecosystem, British Columbia
 Peaceful Society, Science and Innovation Foundation, Canada
 People's Health Movement-Canada, Canada
 Planetary Health Weekly, Canada
 Progress Toronto, Ontario
 Quebec Reunifié, Quebec
 Refugee Protection Initiative, Canada
 Revolutionary Communist Party (formerly Fightback), Canada

 Romero House, Ontario
 Rural Refugee Rights Network, Canada
 Saskatoon Climate Hub, Saskatchewan

 Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Saskatoon/Treaty 6, Saskatchewan
 Social Planning Council of Manitoba, Manitoba
 Socialist Action, Canada
 South Asian Women's and Immigrants' Services (SAWIS), formerly South Asian Women's Rights Organization (SAWRO), Ontario
 Studio for Media Activism & Critical Thought, Ontario
 SURJ Toronto, Ontario
 SWAN Vancouver, British Columbia
 TCRI – Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, Quebec

Independent Jewish Voices – New Brunswick, New Brunswick
 Indus Community Services, Ontario
 International Centre of Art for Social Change, Canada
 IQ SCHOOL, Quebec
 Islamic Social Services Association Inc., Canada (ISSA), Canada
 Jafari Law, Ontario
 Jews for Tikkun Olam: Jewish Social Workers, Therapists & Spiritual Leaders for Social Justice & Palestinian Liberation, Canada
 KAIROS Halifax, Nova Scotia
 La Peche Coalition for a Green New Deal, Quebec
 Labour for Palestine – Quebec City, Quebec
 Latinxs Antifa LGBTIQ+, Montreal, Quebec
 Leading in Colour, Canada
 lehar collective, Quebec
 LINGAP-Canada, Canada
 Migrant Action Centre, Newfoundland and Labrador
 Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, Canada
 Migrante Alberta, Alberta
 Naujawan Support Network, Ontario
 Newcomer Legal Clinic, Ontario
 Niagara Community Legal Clinic, Ontario
 Nko, Ontario
 No More Silence, Canada
 Northumberland Coalition for Social Justice, Ontario
 OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Ontario
 Ontario Palestinian Rights Association, Ontario

 Palestine Solidarity Grey Bruce, Ontario
 Parkdale Community Legal Services, Ontario
 Peace and Justice Alliance, Canada
 PEI Transgender Network, Prince Edward Island
 Peterborough AIDS Resource Network, Ontario
 Policing-Free Schools (Canada), Canada
 qathet Chapter, Council of Canadians, British Columbia
 REACH Community Health Centre, British Columbia
 Research for the Front Lines, Canada
 Rights for Household and Farm Workers (DTMF|RHFW), Canada
 Royalpage village, Quebec
 Sanctuary Health, British Columbia
 Scarborough Campus Students Union, University of Toronto, Ontario
 Social Development Centre Waterloo Region, Ontario

 Social Planning Toronto, Ontario
 South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO), Canada
 Southridge Community Church, Ontario

 Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre, Ontario
 SURJ Vancouver / Metro Vancouver, British Columbia
 Taddle Creek Family Health Team, Ontario
 The Bike Brigade, Ontario

The Canadian BDS Coalition and International BDS Allies, Canada

The Socialist Project, Ontario

Toronto Disability Pride March, Ontario

Toronto Tenant Union, Ontario

United Network For Justice and Peace in Palestine/Israel (UNJPPI), Canada

University-Rosedale for Palestine, Ontario

Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights, British Columbia

Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, Ontario

Welcome Collective / Le Collectif Bienvenue, Quebec

West Coast LEAF, British Columbia

Worker Solidarity Network, British Columbia

World BEYOND War, Canada

The Labour Studies Program, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia

TO350, Ontario

Toronto Metropolitan Association of Part-time Students, Ontario

Unifor Lower Mainland Retired Workers Council, British Columbia

United Steelworkers Toronto Area Council, Ontario

USWA Local 8330, Ontario

Victoria Peace Coalition, British Columbia

Weaving Our Worlds, British Columbia

West Coast Environmental Law Association, British Columbia

WILPF Canada, Canada

Workers Action Centre, Ontario

Zagros Foundation, Ontario