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Why Canadians Should Support the Cross-Canada Campaign to Free Meng Wanzhou

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*On September 28, 2020, **Meng Wanzhou**, Chief Financial Officer of Huawei Technologies and permanent resident of Canada, was forced to make yet another appearance in court in Vancouver where she faces possible extradition to the USA. The charges she faces if extradited to the USA, according to the "superseding indictment" of January 24, 2019, includes seven counts of bank fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to commit both, plus conspiracy to defraud the USA, all of which if proven carry possible sentences of more than one hundred years in a US federal penitentiary, plus heavy fines.*

To date, Ms. Meng has been under house arrest in Vancouver for twenty-two months.

This judicial action against Meng is unjust, politically motivated by the USA, and contrary to the national interests of Canada. In fact, Meng's arrest is being cynically used by the Trump Administration to drag Canada into a trade war and a new cold war with China. Canadians should be very concerned and should demand that the Trudeau Government of Canada drop the extradition proceedings against Meng and release her at once.

Trudeau's Hypocritical Stance on Sanctions on Iran

Meng's arrest was unjust because she committed no crime in Canada. Rather, her company stands accused by the USA of violating the country's unilateral, and therefore illegal, economic sanctions against Iran. As the whole world knows, in 2018, it was the Trump Administration which abrogated the JCPOA (the Iran Nuclear Agreement). The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was several years in the making before becoming enshrined in 2015 as an international treaty in UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The Trudeau Government applauded the Agreement when it came into effect in 2016.

The importance of the ten-year Agreement was that it likely averted a pre-emptive military strike by the USA (supported by Israel) against Iran, while, at the same time, it provided the means by which to remove a regime of economic sanctions which had been imposed by the UN Security Council against the Islamic Republic over several decades. For its part, Iran pledged not to enrich uranium above the level of 5% and to submit to the most stringent inspections ever devised by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). In this way, Iran's partners in the agreement, which included the permanent five member states of the UN Security Council (Russia, China, the USA, the UK, and France) plus Germany, were satisfied that Iran's nuclear program would remain strictly peaceful (as Iran had always maintained) and that it could not manufacture a nuclear weapon.

As a reward from the P5 + 1, the doors of international trade were to have been opened to

the Islamic Republic of Iran, which had been progressively closed since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and monies belonging to the Iranian government, which had been frozen in Western banks, would be returned to Tehran.

Donald Trump made it clear as early as the 2016 US election campaign that he did not like the JCPOA and thought he could wring more concessions out of Iran, particularly regarding disarming Iran's conventional missile program. Following the presidential election, the Trump Administration failed to follow through on removing some of the US's coercive economic measures against Iran, although the IAEA certified time after time that Iran was in compliance of its commitments under the JCPOA.

Finally, on May 8, 2018, Trump abrogated the treaty and announced that the USA would restore some of its previous economic sanctions and even impose further sanctions on Iran in what has today become a campaign of "maximum pressure" on the Islamic Republic.

Although the USA walked away from the Iran Nuclear Agreement, the remaining members of the P5 + 1 declared their profound disappointment and their determination that they would remain within the treaty. The European Union went so far as to create a financial instrument and a financial institution which it hoped would enable corporations resident in the EU to trade with Iran without facing penalties from the USA.

For its part, the Trudeau Government also expressed its regret about the US abrogation of the JCPOA and the hope that the agreement would carry on.

The problem for the USA is that reneging on international agreements (including several strategic arms limitation deals with Russia), walking away from membership in multilateral organizations such as the World Health Organization, and applying unilateral sanctions on Iran without the approval of the UNSC – and even increasing them during the Covid-19 pandemic – was simply not palatable to most countries of the world who were growing more and more alarmed about the untrustworthiness of the USA.

The problem for the rest of the world, however, is that the US regards itself as an exceptional state that is not subject to the rules of international law and routinely tries to apply the principle of *extraterritoriality*. For example, the USA has taken to court several European banks such as Deutsche Bank, the largest bank in Germany, and BNP Paribas of France, as well as corporations like the Chinese ZTE, all of which tried to skirt the US sanctions on Iran. The fines levied against them by the USA were enormous, thus making examples of them in front of the whole world. As a result, despite the EU's specially-created financial instrument and financial institution to get around US sanctions on Iran, no European-based transnational corporations or banks are currently willing to break the de facto US blockade on the Islamic Republic.

The result for the people of Iran is severe: life savings vanish as the value of the national currency plummets, prices of basic commodities are rising dramatically, there's widespread unemployment due to the lack of spare parts and markets, and medical supplies are scarce, despite supposedly being exempt from economic sanctions but which require international monetary transfers to arrange.

In effect, US sanctions are part of a hybrid war on the people of Iran and 38 other countries of the world that also includes conventional military/naval strikes, support for terrorist groups, cyberwarfare, fake news, lawfare, and foreign electoral intervention. The end goal in

implementing coercive economic measures for the US (and Canada), then, – like medieval sieges – is regime change.

The US attempt to extradite Meng Wanzhou, however, is qualitatively different in that it marks the first time the USA has ever tried to extradite an executive of a corporation, rather than just fine the corporation which was seen by the USA to defy its unilateral and illegal economic sanctions on Iran.

The US indictment/arrest warrant against Meng was approved by a court in New York State on Aug 22, 2018, and the US tried unsuccessfully following that date to pressure many countries through which Meng travelled to arrest her. Every single country refused until Meng arrived in Vancouver on December 1, 2018 and Trudeau slavishly and hypocritically acceded to the allegedly "urgent" US extradition request, despite the fact that his government continues to support the JCPOA. The "urgent request" from the US came on November 30, 2018, exactly one day before a US delegation, led by President Trump, met for a working dinner about trade matters with a Chinese delegation, led by President Xi, on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on December 1.

Timing of Meng's Arrest

The timing of the arrest of Meng and the working dinner was not likely a coincidence. According to official US sources, Trump was unaware of the arrest. However, according to former US Secretary of State John Bolton's book, *The Room Where it Happened: A White House Memoir*, claims he knew of Meng's arrest before he sat down to that dinner. In any case, the two delegations left the meeting with a ceasefire in the US trade war on China.

Developments following the arrest of Meng confirm that her arrest was indeed politically motivated. On December 6, 2018, President Trump declared he might release Meng if he secured a favourable trade deal with China. He also told John Bolton that Meng was "a bargaining chip" in his negotiations in his trade war with China. In fact, in *The Room Where it Happened*, Bolton reveals that Trump privately gave Meng Wanzhou the nickname, "The Ivanka Trump of China", a moniker illustrating that Trump understood he was asking Canada to take a high-value hostage in the person of Meng Wanzhou to be leveraged against the People's Republic to get a trade deal favourable to the USA.

In addition, there is the underhanded attempt by the *Five Eyes*, which links five English-speaking remnants of the British Empire, namely the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, in a formal security and intelligence network, to exclude Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd., which is the crown jewel of the Chinese technology industry, from participation in the deployment of 5G internet networks in all of the Five Eyes countries. This underhanded attempt was clearly demonstrated in US Sentators and Select Intelligence Committee members Rubio and Wagner's letter of October 11, 2018, written just six weeks before Meng's arrest, advising Prime Minister Trudeau to exclude Huawei Technologies from the deployment of 5G technology in Canada:

> "…Given the strong statements by former Canadian national security officials as well as similar concerns out of the US, Australia, and the United Kingdom, we hope that you will reconsider Huawei's inclusion in any aspect of Canada's 5G development, introduction, and maintenance. Should you have any questions about the threat that Chinese state-directed telecommunications firms pose to your networks, we urge your government to seek additional information from the US. Intelligence Community."

The senators alleged that involving Huawei in Canada's 5G network would compromise the security of the network and undercut the profitability of domestic US and Canadian tech firms. The fact that the senators furnished no proof that Huawei technology would provide spyware for China and Huawei firmly denies that proposition. And, on the other hand, since at least 2018, the US government has been pressuring its high tech firms routinely to build back doors for US intelligence agencies to access to their encrypted devices.

The arrest and extradition proceeding against Meng Wanzhou have contributed to a major deterioration in Canada-China relations. At various times following Meng's arrest, China, which is Canada's second-largest trading partner after the USA, banned importation of Canadian canola, pork, and lobsters. This has severely affected the livelihoods of thousands of Canadian farmers and fishers who depend on the export of these products to China. 30 per cent of Canadian exports go to China, but Canadian exports only account for less than 2% of China's imports. So the potential of even more harm is possible. In addition, the promising Chinese-Canadian collaboration on a COVID-19 vaccine collapsed.

Canada and its people paid dearly so far and gained nothing from Trudeau's slavish acceptance of Trump's request to arrest and extradite Meng to the USA. Moreover, given the Trudeau government's stated aim to diversify its trading partnership, if is counter-productive for Canada to pick a fight with its second largest trading partner. In what should have been the straw that broke the camel's back, Trudeau failed to release Meng after Trump levelled a new 10% tariff on Canadian aluminum on August 6, 2020, despite the signing of the USMCA free trade deal this year. The tariff was removed a month later.

It's also important to note that Huawei Technologies Canada employs 1300 very highly-paid workers in Canada and is very heavily invested in contributing its advanced, made-in-Canada, R&D expertise to Canada's 5G network. In fact, Huawei recently moved its entire US R&D division en masse from Silicon Valley, California, to Markham, Ontario, due to deteriorating relations between the USA and China. All of these Canadian jobs, plus the several Huawei research and development centres at several locations across Canada, are threatened by deteriorating relations between Canada and China.

On June 23, 2020, nineteen former highly-ranking Canadian politicians and diplomats, including a former minister of justice, penned an open letter to Trudeau noting that, in the "Greenspan Opinion", a leading Canadian lawyer had delivered an opinion that it was entirely within the rule of law for the minister of immigration unilaterally to end the extradition proceedings against Meng. They noted the harm being done to Canada by the continuing prosecution of Meng as well as the arrest and prosecution in China of the "Two Michaels" (Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig). The nineteen signatories ended their open letter with a call for Meng's release. However, the Trudeau government has not yet acceded to their recommendation at the time of this writing.

The Cross-Canada Campaign to Free Meng Wanzhou

Understanding that the Trump Administration is trying to draw the Trudeau government into its campaign to vilify China, to disrupt international cooperation, free trade, and multilateralism, all of which is rapidly leading to a new cold war and possibly to actual military hostilities; and recognizing now that it's entirely within the discretion of Immigration Minister Medicino and in accordance with the rule of law for him to end extradition proceedings against Meng, the Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War announced on September 29, 2020 the start of a comprehensive, grass-roots, public campaign to free

Meng, stating that it would like to see a positive reset of Canada-China relations.

> In its statement, the Coalition made three demands of the Government of Canada:
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> 1) cease extradition proceedings against Meng and release her immediately;
>
> 2) protect Canadian jobs by permitting Huawei Technologies Canada to participate in the Canadian deployment of a 5G internet network;
>
> 3) initiate a long-overdue foreign policy review to develop an independent foreign policy for Canada.

In the past week, the Coalition also launched a parliamentary petition to free Meng Wanzhou under the sponsorship of MP Niki Ashton of the New Democratic Party. According to the rules of the House of Commons, if the petition garners at least 500 signatures in 120 days, Ashton will formally introduce the petition in the House, forcing the Trudeau Government formally to respond.

To date, **Parliamentary Petition e-2857** has garnered 280 signatures from Canadians and permanent residents of Canada, with 115 days to go.

According to the Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War, the campaign will also include virtual public meetings, virtual visits to MP's office, letters to editors and op-ed pieces, and hopefully a Cross-Canada Day of Action on December 1, 2020, the second anniversary of Meng's arrest.

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This article was originally published on The Canada Files.

People who interested in supporting this campaign are urged to contact the writer at kenstone@cogeco.ca.

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