

**solidarity across borders**

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# **Solidarity Across Borders**

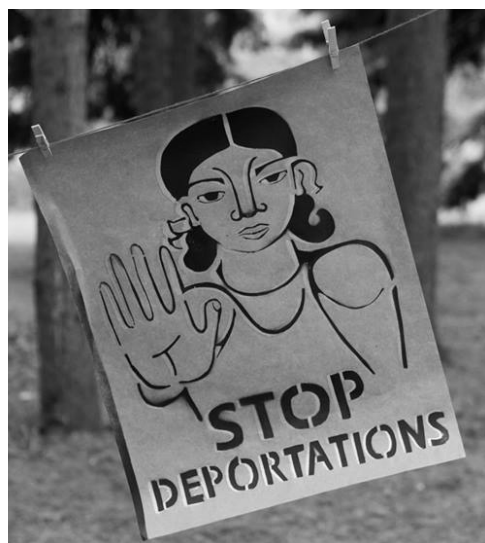


# Solidarity Across Borders

At its foundation, Canada is based on the theft of Indigenous lands, and the ongoing genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples. Its borders were established by colonial wars, to benefit European colonizers. This recognition lies at the heart of our rejection of the Canadian state's borders and the system of multi-tiered status, deportation and detention created by its immigration laws.



Changes implemented in 2012 (Bill C-31), have made Canadian immigration laws even more repressive. One result has been a historic low in the acceptance of refugees, with only 33 percent accepted in 2013. Such laws further constrain migrants' choices, restrict recourse, limit access to social services, and push more migrants underground.



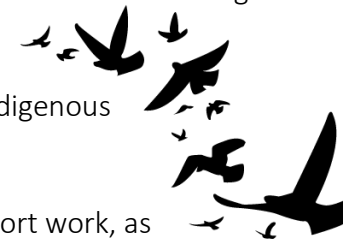
## Solidarity Across Borders

Solidarity Across Borders is a migrant justice network based in Montreal, active since 2003. We are migrants and allies, and we organize together to support community members who are confronting an unjust immigration and refugee system. We mobilize around our main demands: an end to deportations, detentions, and the double punishment of migrants with criminal records. We demand Status for All! and working towards transforming Montreal into a Solidarity City.

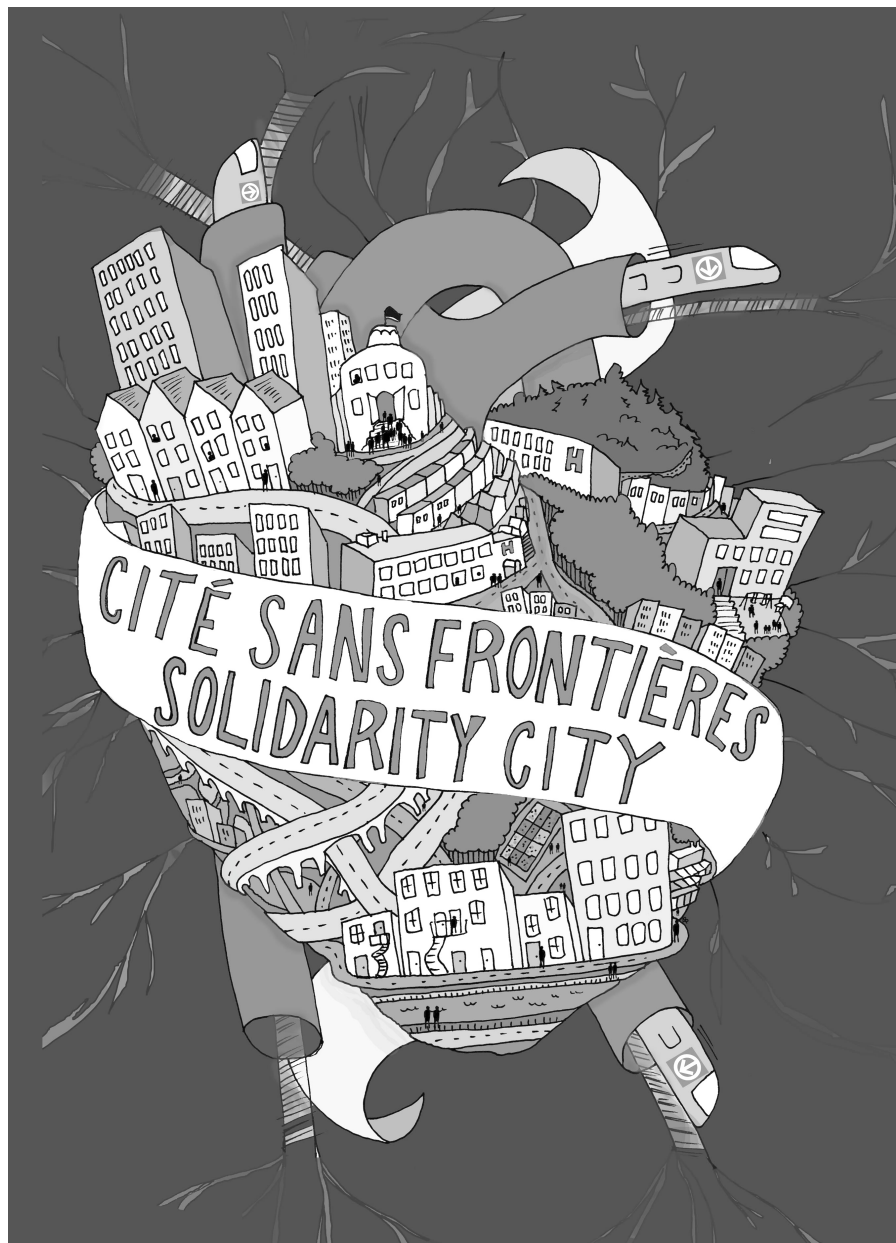
We are in solidarity with struggles for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

We mobilize by popular education, support work, as well as political mobilizations, including demonstrations, pickets, and direct actions.

We encourage you to check our website or get in touch by phone or e-mail for more information. All of us can be part of building a Solidarity City in Montreal : [www.solidarityacrossborders.org](http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org)  
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As one important symbolic step towards this end, you can endorse our Solidarity City declaration, which can be found on our website here: [www.solidarityacrossborders.org/solidarity-city/solidarity-city-declaration](http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org/solidarity-city/solidarity-city-declaration).



# Status for All

“Status for All” means that we demand a full, comprehensive, and ongoing regularization program for everyone living in Montreal, Quebec, and Canada who does not have permanent residence or citizenship.



Regularization programmes are sometimes also called “amnesties”. We prefer not to use that term, since migrants don’t need to be excused or pardoned for exercising their completely legitimate and understandable choice to migrate to another part of the world, whether for economic or political reasons - or any other reason. People migrate for understandable, legitimate and sometimes necessary reasons. By demanding Status for All we stand in solidarity with all migrants.

The number of people living in Canada without state permission is highly disputed: in 2015, Radio Canada quoted a figure of 44,000 undocumented people in Canada; No One Is Illegal relies on a 2006 RCMP source stating that there are half a million. In addition, many thousands more live without permanent status: people awaiting a decision on their refugee file, refused refugees, people on temporary work, student or tourist visas, etc.

The state's refusal to recognize all migrants as full members of society creates a fundamentally unjust reality within our communities, whereby some people are able to access basic rights and services – like education, health-care and workers' protections - and others are not. Someone who is undocumented, or who does not have permanent residence or citizenship, can be more easily exploited because they live in fear of arrest and deportation.

In the past, providing rights and services to some people, while systematically denying those rights and services to others, was justified by explicit appeals to racism or false ideas of cultural superiority. In the 21st century, this system of exclusion is an aspect of a larger system of global apartheid, whereby the global South is systematically exploited and oppressed, to the benefit of the global North.



We fight apartheid both globally and internally. Canadian capital ships jobs overseas in order to exploit labour to better advantage in situations of crisis and turmoil. At the same time, federal and provincial immigration policies trap migrants fleeing crisis and turmoil into another system of exploitation in Canada. In factories, agricultural fields, restaurants, hospitals, and homes around Montreal, undocumented and temporary migrants work in precarity to produce cheap goods and food, to clean, serve, and look after the children of the middle class and wealthy. Social benefits enjoyed by Canadian citizens are subsidized by the labour of people reviled in racist discourses as “illegals”, “bogus refugees”, “criminals”, dangers to “national security”, “terrorists”, and threats to “our values”.

**Immigrants with disabilities can be refused status in Canada because they are deemed a burden to health and social services. We oppose this disability oppression and ableism. Status for All means everyone has equal access to rights and social services, whatever their abilities.**

The “Solidarity City” campaign is an attempt to generalize and broaden some key organizing principles that have been applied in migrant justice work in Montreal:

- ★ breaking isolation and fear; attempting to network and unify around common, direct and straightforward demands (ie. status for all, as well as opposition to deportations and detentions);
- ★ practicing tangible mutual aid and solidarity in contrast to charity or “service” approaches;
- ★ organizing campaigns arising from on-the-ground realities;
- ★ building the capacity of our mutual aid and support networks over the long-term;
- ★ holding decision-makers directly accountable for their actions and policies;
- ★ using direct action to achieve justice.

In order to bring this vision closer to reality, we are asking community organizations and centres, collectives, trade unions, healthcare providers, educational institutions, food banks, shelters, housing co-ops, and everyone else to commit to providing services equally to all, regardless of immigration status.





# Solidarity City

For thousands of undocumented immigrants across the country, cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are sweatshops. Immigrants and refugees work the most precarious and dangerous jobs. The Canadian economy cannot survive without this super-exploited workforce, made precarious by their lack of permanent status and the threat of forced removal.

Everybody should have access to healthcare, education, social housing, food banks, unemployment benefits and any other social welfare regardless of immigration status. Labour norms and human rights should apply equally to all.



Solidarity City is the name given to the vision that resists this reality, that aims to transform our communities from sites of racist exploitation to places of mutual aid and support, for immigrants and refugees, as well as all other Montrealers.

We are opposing fear, isolation, precarity and division. We strike back with solidarity, mutual aid, support work and direct action.



We want to break the fear and isolation associated with the reality of being undocumented. Status for All rejects the divide-and-rule tactics used by the state to classify migrants as “deserving” versus “undeserving”, or “good” versus “bad” immigrants. We aim to create genuine solidarity between all migrants, whatever their reasons for migration, whether they are new immigrants or “integrated”, undocumented, refugees, temporary workers, on welfare, criminalized, or immigrants with disabilities.



Simply put, Status for All means that all residents of Canada have equal access to all social services and have equal recourse to all rights. Status for All means we struggle and organize so that all residents, regardless of their origins, can have full dignity as human beings.

**STATUS FOR ALL!**

# No to deportations!

While Canada's immigration system has always been marked by racist and classist exclusion, deportations from Canada have increased over the last decade; in 2012-13, 18,000 people were deported, according to Minister of Immigration Steven Blaney.



People can be ordered deported when their refugee claim is refused, after their student, tourist or temporary work visas expire, because of a criminal record, or in a mass deportation after a moratorium is lifted, for any of these reasons. When their exploited labour is no longer needed, or when they stand up for their rights, migrants become disposable.

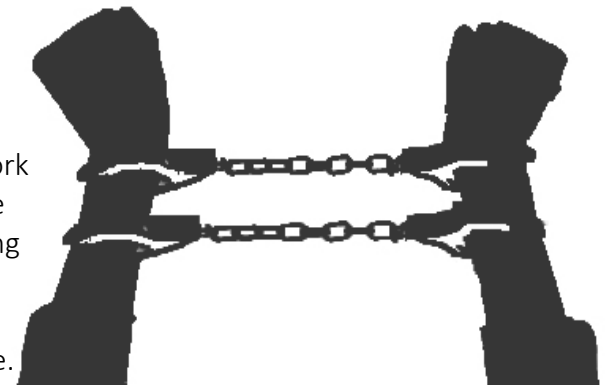
Canada deports people without permanent status, people waiting for a response on their sponsorship or humanitarian applications, permanent residents, and citizens (such as children born in Canada whose parents have been refused). Canada regularly separates families: grandparents from their children and grandchildren, couples from each other, and parents from children. Deportations separate people from families, friends and lives that they have established in Canada.

# No to double punishment!

"Double punishment" is the term used to describe the unjust policy used against migrants without citizenship who face deportation after serving a sentence for a criminal conviction. Non-citizens who commit criminal offenses are punished twice: once through the prison system when they are sentenced for their crime, and then through the immigration system by being permanently deported from Canada, all too often after living here since their childhood.

Double punishment is often the direct result of racial profiling. A 2010 leaked study of Montreal police reporting proves that police racial profiling is endemic in Montreal. Neighbourhoods such as Montreal Nord, St-Michel, Parc Extension, and Côte-des-Neiges are over-policed and criminalized due to the density of immigrant and racialized communities. The targeting of these communities forces a disproportionate number of poor people and people of colour into the prison system, and subsequently into deportation proceedings if they do not have full Canadian citizenship.

The reality of double punishment highlights the ways in which the prison system and the immigration system work together to destroy the lives of migrants, tearing families apart, and criminalizing people of colour and poor people.



Double punishment also often provokes feelings of shame and isolation, due to the stigma of a criminal conviction. We aim to break this isolation by taking a clear stance against criminalization, and against deportations on criminal grounds. We struggle together to resist double punishment alongside individuals fighting to remain with their families, friends and community here in Montreal.

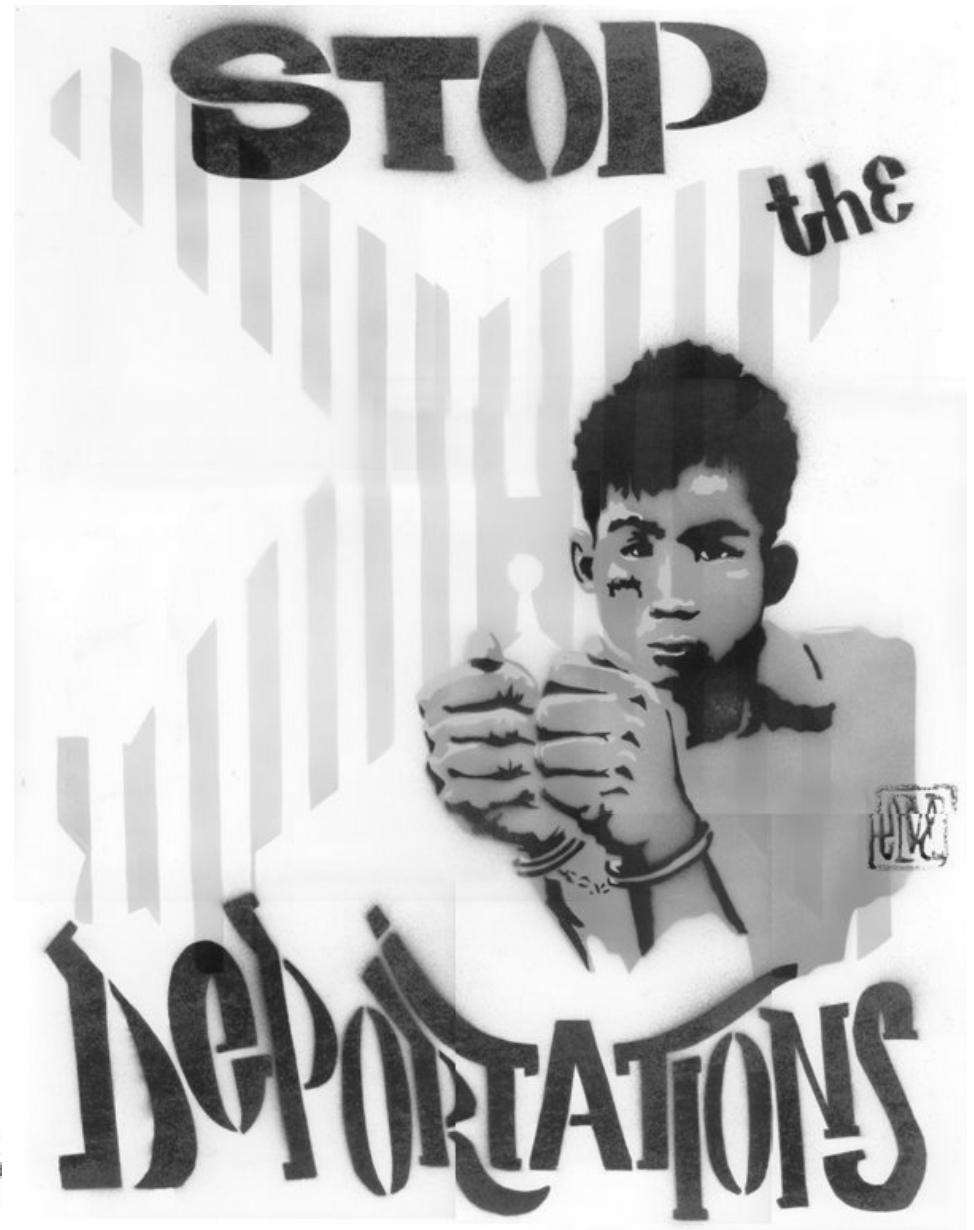
to legal and translation services which means that it is difficult for them to make claims and applications.

Changes to immigration law in 2012 gave the immigration minister new discretionary power to designate some migrants as “irregular arrivals”. Migrants designated in this way are automatically detained as they wait to know whether their refugee claim will be allowed. This change reinforced “Fortress Canada” and will do nothing to deter migrants from taking dangerous, costly, and precarious routes to get to Canada.

The Laval Immigration Holding Centre is the nearest immigrant detention center to Montreal, with a maximum capacity of 144. In 2013-2014, over 1100 people passed through its walls, for an average of 16 days imprisonment each. Migrants are also detained in Rivières-des-Prairies (RDP) and other provincial prisons, generally for longer periods of time (average of 50 days in 2013-2014).

Migrant detention is a profitable industry for several private security companies, such as Garda and G4S. With headquarters in Montreal, Garda, a multinational security company, has a multi-million dollar contract with the CBSA to staff the Laval detention centre.

We demand the immediate release of all Detainees in immigration detention facilities, and we work towards the closing of all detention centres. We oppose all forms of incarceration.





Bureaucratic and legal avenues to challenge deportation orders are complex, costly, and offer almost no hope. Over 97% of Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) decisions, the next-to-last step before a deportation, are negative. Under the changes to immigration law implemented in 2012, people can no longer even access a PRRA for an entire year after their refugee claim is refused or, in the case of those from countries on the “safe country list”, three years. Applications for stays of deportation are systematically refused by the CBSA, and the Federal Court only rarely accepts to review these refusals.



While capital, corporations and privileged “first world” nationals travel freely wherever they want, migrants from the majority world are illegalized, criminalized and prevented from exercising this fundamental freedom. They become ‘illegal immigrants’, ‘non-status’, ‘undocumented’, and ‘failed asylum seekers’; their deportation is normalized as part of the day-to-day maintenance of Canadian nationhood. The threat of deportation keeps them in constant precarity and serves to control and crush resistance to exploitation.

We stand in solidarity with those who resist their deportations. We believe that everyone should have the freedom to migrate, resist forced displacement, and return to their homelands.

# No to detentions!

The Canadian state gives itself the right to detain any migrant in the immigration and refugee process, including children, for indefinite periods of time and without charge. Annually, from 2005 to 2014, between 8,900 and 14,300 migrants spent time in “immigration holding centres”, as well as in municipal, provincial and federal prisons. The average number of days each person spent in detention climbed during this period from 14 to 22; while most people spent a few weeks inside, others were locked up for months or even years.



Border agents and immigration bureaucrats have discretionary power to detain people for not having valid identity documents, on suspicion that they pose a public safety threat or as a flight risk (i.e., belief that they will not show up to an immigration appointment or deportation).

Detainees are often excluded from bail and have no idea when and if they will be released. Immigrants in detention centers have minimal