

Britain: Antiwar protesters call for withdrawal of troops from Iraq

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Several hundred protesters gathered for a lobby of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's official residency in London on Saturday, April 17, to protest the continued occupation of Iraq by the US and Britain.

The lobby was convened under the demand "Give Iraq Back to the Iraqis—End the Slaughter" by the Stop the War Coalition, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Muslim Association of Britain. Also present was a 40-strong contingent from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The lobby followed Blair's visit to the White House and his solidarising himself with US President George W. Bush on his actions in Iraq and the endorsement of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's illegal annexation of a swathe of the occupied West Bank. Placards at the protest drew out the similarities between the onslaught against civilians taking place in Iraqi cities and that of the Israeli Defence Forces against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Chairing the proceedings, a speaker from the Stop the War Coalition said that Iraq today "looks less and less like liberation and more like a colonial occupation." A speaker from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign said, "What the occupying powers are doing in Fallujah is exactly what the Israelis have been doing in Palestine for the last 15 years."

Denouncing Blair as a "cowardly leader," the speaker called for an end to the occupation of Iraq, "but also the end of the illegal occupation of Palestine." The speaker called for support for a demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square on May 15.

Antiwar Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn said that as an occupying power, Britain "is complicit in the attacks in Fallujah, just as we are complicit in the attacks taking place in cities throughout Iraq."

He said that a country isn't liberated by killing

civilians and imposing a government upon it and that the protesters "must demand that the Iraqi people are able to get together and decide their own future in their own time." He was "very suspicious" at the way in which the Iraqi Ruling Council had been appointed and that it was designed to serve only American interests.



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