

British MPs return to Parliament after Supreme Court rules prorogation illegal

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The House of Commons resumed sitting Wednesday, following the Supreme Court's ruling that Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson acted illegally in proroguing Parliament for five weeks from September 10. Its deliberations nevertheless reflected the extreme paralysis gripping ruling circles over Brexit.

As explained by the WSWS, the Supreme Court judgment has done nothing to ameliorate the crisis in ruling circles. The pro-hard Brexit media responded by denouncing the Supreme Court as a politicised institution that had betrayed the "will of the people" in seeking to prevent Brexit.

The *Daily Mail* headlined its front page, "Boris blasts: Who Runs Britain" and declared that the prime minister had "declared war on the judiciary. ..." The *Sun*, owned by billionaire media mogul Rupert Murdoch, described the court decision as "an unprecedented act of constitutional vandalism" as "11 judges became an unelected political entity." This had "effectively granted the power to rule not to our actual Government but to a rogue Speaker and an unelected Remainer pseudo-government too cowardly to seek a mandate. It is staggering incendiary."

The government, too, doubled down on its anti-democratic agenda, making the most pro-forma statement that it would abide by the ruling that the previous session of parliament be resumed. The hard Brexit Leader of the House, Jacob Rees-Mogg was reported as describing the Supreme Court decision as a "constitutional coup."

Attorney General Geoffrey Cox played a central role in Johnson's authoritarian move, having advised the government that a five-week proroguing of Parliament was legal. In his address to parliament, Cox dismissed the import of the opinion passed by all 11 Supreme

Court judges that Johnson had acted unlawfully in proroguing Parliament for five weeks, telling Parliament, "There is no question that the Supreme Court found in any way that any advice that had been given [to the queen, to enable prorogation] was consciously or knowingly misleading."

Cox then went on the offensive, describing a chamber in which pro-EU MPs are in a clear majority as a "dead Parliament. ... It has no moral right to sit on these green benches."

Before it was prorogued, Remain-supporting MPs focussed on passing a cross-party European Union Withdrawal Act (Number 2) to tie Johnson's hands and prevent a no-deal Brexit. The Act stipulates that if no exit agreement is reached with the EU by October 19, then the prime minister has to request of the EU a three-month Brexit delay.

Before Parliament was suspended, opposition MPs refused to accept, on two occasions, the government's call for an election before the October 31 Brexit deadline had been ruled out. On this same basis, the Remain opposition have refused to call a vote on confidence in a collapsing government, as this would likely trigger a general election under conditions in which the Remain faction are unable to agree who would head a caretaker government prior to an election.

Cox confirmed that the government would soon bring forward a motion calling for fresh elections, declaring, "let me tell them the truth: they could vote no confidence at any time, but they are too cowardly. They could agree to a motion to allow this house to dissolve but they are too cowardly."

Opposition MPs would not support an immediate election as "so many of them are really all about preventing us leaving the European Union at all."

Johnson followed in the same vein later that evening,

reiterating that the Supreme Court “was wrong to pronounce on what is essentially a political question. ...”

He dared Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, or any of the smaller opposition parties, to call a vote of no-confidence in his government, to which none responded. Playing to the baying Tory benches, he called for a campaign to “Free the Islington One!”—a reference to Corbyn’s constituency, describing him as a prisoner of his own party who was not allowed to demand a general election because his own MPs feared him winning a general election probably more than the possibility he would lose one.

Johnson’s crowing about the Tories being able to implement their reactionary anti-working-class agenda, post-Brexit, has been made possible thanks to Corbyn’s wretched capitulation to the pro-imperialist agenda of his party’s Blairite right wing, his determined efforts to suppress the class struggle and refusal to mobilise the working class to intervene independently in the grave crisis of rule facing British imperialism.

Corbyn has instead become the living embodiment of the paralysis wracking the bourgeoisie as its dominant Remain faction considers whether he can be entrusted to head a caretaker government to prevent Johnson from implementing an economically disastrous no-deal withdrawal from the EU.

Corbyn, who spent decades opposing the EU—on the basis of a nationalist perspective he adopted from the Stalinist Communist Party, Labour’s Bennite left and the trade union bureaucracy—has, since he became party leader four years ago, faithfully articulated the political diktats of the Remain-supporting bourgeoisie.

He spent the days leading to the opening of Labour’s conference desperately seeking to ensure that his Blairite deputy leader, Tom Watson, was kept in position by thwarting moves to remove this widely despised figure; suspending moves to deselect other MPs; and opposing a discussion on restoring Clause Four of Labour’s constitution, the so-called “socialist clause” junked by Tony Blair committing the party to public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy.

His efforts have been duly noted, with the *Financial Times* suggesting that it may be necessary to accept Corbyn as the temporary head of a national unity government tasked with preventing a no-deal Brexit. As parliament returned, the *FT* editorialised that to

avoid a “calamitous no-deal exit...[t]he reconvened parliament should...pass a vote of no confidence in the premier [Johnson]. It should use its right to form a caretaker government that can secure an extension to the October 31 Brexit date and organise a general election.”

The Socialist Equality Party insisted from the outset that Corbyn did not represent a genuine alternative for the working class and that his taking the leadership did not change Labour’s character as a trusted party of state.

Every means that excludes the working class from political life, including preventing a general election, is being considered by the Remain faction to overturn Johnson’s threats of a no-deal Brexit. Since the weekend, opposition MPs, led by Labour’s Watson have demanded an investigation into Johnson’s connections with American businesswoman and ex-model Jennifer Arcuri, 34. The *Sunday Times* revealed that when Johnson was London mayor, he became close friends with Arcuri after which her company received more than £100,000 in public money.

In his reply to Johnson, Corbyn dutifully pushed this agenda as he demanded answers from Johnson on his relationship with Arcuri. But his role in disarming the working class is epitomised by his refusal to warn of the true gravity of the dangers posed.

One of the ministerial statements given yesterday by the Tories was on their Operation Yellowhammer Brexit contingency plans. In his reply to Johnson, Corbyn spoke of the likely disruption that will befall big business and the impact of rising prices of food and other basics. But he remained silent regarding the government’s plans to mobilise as many as 50,000 troops and 10,000 riot police to suppress the social discontent the document predicts will arise. This is because all factions of the ruling class are at one in the necessity of such plans to confront the working class in this tumultuous period.



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