

# Corbyn grovels to Privy Council, seeking to block mass anti-war movement

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British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has responded to the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani and US war threats against Iran by calling on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to convene a meeting of the Queen's Privy Council.

Corbyn's request to Johnson, US President Donald Trump's most bullish defender on the world stage, was issued in a letter just hours after the January 3 missile strike that killed Iran's second most senior political leader.

"The US assassination of Qassem Suleimani is an extremely serious and dangerous escalation of conflict with global significance," Corbyn explained in a tweet prior to the letter's publication, politely omitting the words "war crime", "imperialism" and "oil".

He called on Johnson's government, led by Thatcherite warmongers such as Dominic Raab, Priti Patel and Jacob Rees-Mogg, to "urge restraint on the part of both Iran and the US, and stand up to the belligerent actions and rhetoric coming from the US."

With millions of Iranians pouring onto the streets to condemn US imperialism's act of war, and with millions more across the Middle East and around the world expressing their opposition to the US airstrikes and their fears of a wider conflagration, Corbyn assumed the role of elder statesman, issuing his own appeal to a reactionary unelected institution over which Queen Elizabeth II presides.

Corbyn's letter to Johnson was framed as a defence of British national security interests and exhibited Corbyn's trademark deference to the state: "Dear Prime Minister, I am writing to request an urgent Privy Council briefing on the consequences for the United Kingdom of the assassination of Qassem Suleimani."

His letter presented seven questions to Johnson, mainly echoing the concerns of sections of the British ruling class, including senior Tories, that Trump's targeted missile strike on Suleimani was carried out unilaterally and without prior consultation with Britain. "1) Was HM [Her Majesty's] government informed in advance of the US president's decision to launch this attack? 2) If the HM government was informed in advance of the action, what advice was given to the US administration in relation to the UK government's attitude or concerns about the proposed action? 3) subsequent to the US

attack, what communications have taken place with the US administration, and in particular, has the Prime Minister spoken directly to the President about the attack and its expected consequences?"

Two days later, Corbyn complained that he had received "no answer" from Johnson to his "vital questions". But the answer was Sunday's joint declaration by the British, French and German governments supporting the US attack on Suleimani. A NATO meeting followed Monday, with Jens Stoltenberg condemning, "Iran's support of a variety of different terrorist groups," and declaring that "Iran must refrain from further violence and provocations."

As for the "expected consequences" of the US attack, Jeremy Corbyn need only have read the US President's Twitter account. Trump followed up on Friday morning's assassination with threats to strike 52 Iranian sites, declaring on Saturday: "THEY WILL BE HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

Corbyn's letter to Johnson tactfully omitted any reference to decades of illegal invasion, occupation and regime change by British governments across the Middle East and North Africa since 2001, portraying Britain—whose Empire once spanned the globe—as a force for peace and restraint. He asked, "[H]as the UK government expressed its opposition to this action, called for restraint by the US and for a de-escalation of tension between the US and Iran?"

The protection of British strategic interests in the Middle East was Corbyn's primary concern: "Given the present risk of an Iranian military response to the US attack what measures has the UK Government taken to ensure the safety of UK nationals in the region and beyond, and what action has been taken to protect UK shipping and UK strategic locations?"

Johnson's government gave answer to Corbyn's request Saturday, deploying the Royal Navy's HMS Montrose and the destroyer HMS Defender to the Strait of Hormuz to protect British oil tankers in the strategic passage. British military commanders announced they were working to preserve the US-British military presence in Iraq.

Corbyn's letter feigned surprise at the US attack on Suleimani, but Trump's action comes just weeks after a record US military budget of \$738 billion, pushed through with bipartisan support from the Democratic Party. The bill removed

a series of provisions restricting US military action, including the requirement that Trump obtain congressional approval before initiating military operations against Iran.

Throughout the general election campaign, Corbyn buried the war issue, ensuring it played no part in Labour's election campaign. His stance was consistent with Labour's election manifesto decrying Tory cuts to the armed forces, pledging a Strategic Defence and Security Review, attacking Russian "interference" and promising to meet NATO spending commitments equal to 2 percent of GDP.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, being tortured in London's Belmarsh Prison for exposing war crimes, was collateral damage in Corbyn's filthy efforts at protecting "Labour Party unity" with the Blairites.

Corbyn's request for a briefing by the Privy Council—a feudal relic of the British ruling elite that advises the Queen and meets in strict secrecy—epitomises his opposition to the development of a class-based movement against war. Privy Councillors are appointed by the queen. Its 650 members comprise current and former prime ministers, cabinet members, senior members of the Royal Family and large sections of the British aristocracy—including Lords, Barons, Dames, Dukes and Archbishops. Corbyn is a member of the Privy Council, along with shadow cabinet members John McDonnell, Diane Abbott, Emily Thornberry and Sir Keir Starmer. Among the unindicted war criminals on the Privy Council are former Labour prime minister Tony Blair and his adviser, Lord Peter Mandelson.

The website of the Privy Council declares there is "nothing at all 'secret' about Privy Council meetings. The myth that the Privy Council is a secretive body springs from the wording of the Privy Council Oath, which, in its current form, dates back to Tudor times. It requires those taking it to 'keep secret all matters... treated of in Council'." Yet the "myth" is true, with the Privy Council website proceeding to explain, "The Oath (or Solemn Affirmation for those who cannot take an Oath) is still administered, and is still binding; but it is only in very special circumstances nowadays that matters will come to a Privy Counsellor on 'Privy Council terms'. These will mostly concern matters of the national interest where it is important for senior members of Opposition parties to have access to Government information."

Corbyn is begging for precisely such "Privy Council terms" in "the national interest", with any information—including that relating to war preparations by the British state—discussed by senior government ministers and the queen behind the backs of the population. In 2003, in the run-up to the Iraq War, the Blair government briefed opposition leaders Iain Duncan Smith and Charles Kennedy on "Privy Council terms," presenting them with manufactured claims about Iraqi "Weapons of Mass Destruction".

Corbyn's pro-imperialist politics sets the tone for Britain's official anti-war movement, the Stop the War Coalition (STWC). Corbyn was its chairman prior to becoming Labour

leader, resigning in September 2015 to avoid a "conflict of interest". But he can rely on the STWC's leadership—including Lindsey German of the pseudo-left Counterfire and Stalinist Andrew Murray, one of Corbyn's chief political advisors throughout his period as opposition leader—to police mass anti-war sentiment.

The hypocritical formulation used by Corbyn on January 3, urging "restraint on the part of both Iran and the US," became the preamble to a petition created by the STWC on January 6 in response to the US assassination of Suleimani.

On Saturday, Labour's former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell was given pride of place at a protest called by STWC outside Downing Street. This was a flagrant cover-up for the Corbynite left's stinking record in facilitating British and US warmongering. In December 2015, Corbyn granted the Blairites a free vote to bomb Syria while successive Labour Party manifestos backed the Trident nuclear program and NATO spending targets.

McDonnell's last major statement on war was an October 2019 interview with *GQ* magazine, in which he told Blair's former spin doctor Alastair Campbell, a key architect of the dodgy dossier used to stampede Britain into war against Iraq, that all was forgiven. "Is Tony Blair a war criminal?" Campbell asked, to which McDonnell replied, "No! No!"

Did he support Campbell's own expulsion from the Labour Party, McDonnell was asked, replying obsequiously, "No ... Come back, Alastair, all is forgiven!"

Speaking outside Downing Street on Saturday, McDonnell said, "I regret deeply that Jeremy Corbyn is not in Number 10, as we would have a prime minister who is seeking conflict resolution and conflict prevention."

The only conflict that Corbyn and his pseudo-left apologists are seeking to prevent is that between the working class and the capitalist state, its institutions and the parties now preparing for war.



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