

# Labour leader Keir Starmer mobbed by far-right anti-vaxxers

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Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer had to be escorted to a police car in London yesterday evening after being mobbed by a group of far-right, anti-vax “Covid Freedom” protestors.

People chanted “traitor” and shouted “scum”, “child abuser”, “working for your new order”, “you’ve betrayed our country” and “you should be hung”, accusing Starmer of “protecting paedophiles” and not “opposing the government” over COVID vaccinations and restrictions. The *Mirror* reported that one person was carrying a noose. Two have been arrested for throwing a traffic cone at police.

In the most widely circulated footage from the event, a video by the right-wing participants in the protest Resistance GB, the cameraman shouts repeatably about Starmer’s role in the persecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The protest was attended by Piers Corbyn, the leading light of the UK anti-vax movement, who last October erected a gallows outside parliament in protest against vaccine passports and last December called on supporters to “hammer to death those scum who have decided to go ahead with introducing new fascism ... go to their offices and, well, I would recommend burning them down.”

He announced at the beginning of yesterday’s protest, “We’re here to end all the jab mandates and the jab programmes in the United Kingdom and the world. We’re here to end all the COVID regulations.” Speaking to the mob after Starmer was able to leave, he commented, “It’s quite exciting just hanging around here, isn’t it?”

The ultimate author of this attack is Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

On Monday January 31, during parliamentary discussions on the redacted Sue Gray report into Tory

drinks parties at Downing Street during the UK’s two pandemic lockdowns, Starmer called on Tory MPs to oust the prime minister. Johnson responded by accusing Starmer of spending “most of his time prosecuting journalists and failing to prosecute Jimmy Savile” when he was the director of public prosecutions from 2008 to 2013.

This was a red flag for the far-right forces that attacked Starmer yesterday and Johnson maintained it for days, even after many Tory MPs seized on the issue to further the campaign for his removal. Starmer later accused Johnson of “parroting the conspiracy theories of violent fascists.”

Jimmy Savile is one of the most reviled figures in the UK. The former television and radio personality, who built his reputation on his charity work, was outed as a serial paedophile sex offender after his death on October 29, 2011. Amid substantial evidence of a cover-up of Savile’s crimes, Starmer was accused, especially by far-right activists and without any evidence, of playing a role in a decision not to prosecute Savile.

To invoke these allegations more than a decade later was a Trumpian moment for the embattled prime minister, a conscious appeal to the far-right layers of anti-vaxxers which the entire Tory Party has cultivated throughout the pandemic. And it worked.

Johnson’s accusations were echoed by Starmer’s fascistic assailants, who repeatedly yelled Savile’s name at him. They have been emboldened by the government’s ending of all mitigation measures, including the recent abandonment of plans to bring in mandatory vaccination of health and care workers, hailed as a victory justifying the anti-lockdown, “bodily autonomy” rhetoric of Piers Corbyn and his ilk.

The international parallels are clear. Not only was Johnson following Trump’s playbook in whipping up

far-right conspiracy theorists, but the attack took place during a somewhat feeble attempt to emulate the “Freedom Convoy” targeting the Canadian government of Justin Trudeau.

Though small in number, the emboldening of these layers must act as a warning of the implications of the right-wing climate being whipped up during the Tory Party crisis, including by Starmer and the Labour Party, characterised by a turn to a naked policy of herd immunity and the promotion of nationalism and anti-communism to legitimise NATO’s military threats against Russia.



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