

UK Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer slanders Roger Waters, demands censorship

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Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer joined the witch-hunt of musician Roger Waters with a McCarthyite call for his performances in the UK to be cancelled. His efforts failed and the tour completed six successful performances in Birmingham, Glasgow, London and Manchester.

Waters' steadfast criticism of NATO's war in Ukraine, defence of the Palestinians from Israeli state repression and support for the imprisoned anti-war journalist Julian Assange has earned him the ire of imperialist governments everywhere. The Pink Floyd co-founder was recently forced to fight a legal case in Germany to overturn the cancelling of a performance by the state of Hesse and is being investigated by the Berlin police department on charges of "incitement of hatred".

Fearing to go after Waters directly for his anti-war views, vile and baseless accusations have been made by his opponents in politics and the media. They centre on the absurd claim Waters is promoting anti-Semitism because he dons a fascist-type uniform during his *This is Not a Drill* show in a section of it containing songs from Pink Floyd's 1979 album, *The Wall*, which ruthlessly satirizes bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism and anti-communism.

Using an avalanche of anti-Semitism slanders as a cover for a campaign of political suppression was pioneered in Britain in recent years against former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters—driving them out of the Labour Party. With Waters' international tour in the UK from May 31-June 10, the same forces were set in motion.

Starmer and Conservative government Communities Secretary Michael Gove both penned public letters of condemnation this month on the request of the Zionist Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD), published last

week. The BoD played a central role in the campaign against Corbyn.

Starmer's letter, dated June 1, 2023, is further to the right than Gove's.

The government minister feels obliged to say in his friendly reply, "The Government is clear that everyone has a fundamental right to freedom of speech and artistic expression, so long as they remain within the law." Accusing Waters of "reportedly falling short" of the expectation to "behave responsibly and not abuse" his platform, he finishes, "if you feel anything that Roger Waters says or does crosses the line into that which is unlawful, this should of course be reported to the Police."

The Labour leader is in contrast unequivocal. Waters, he writes, "has clearly espoused antisemitic views to his audiences" and is "synonymous with spreading deeply troubling antisemitism". There should be "no artistic license for discrimination and racism," so Starmer concludes, "I believe this show should not be allowed to go ahead. Views like this should not be given a platform."

He promises to "lend his voice" to the BoD's efforts to pressure "the public bodies in question".

Starmer's public demand to censor a major international artist confirms that the right-wing, pro-Zionist forces which spearheaded the campaign to oust Corbyn as Labour leader are fully in charge of the party, and that Starmer is the most direct mouthpiece of British imperialism and its state apparatus in British politics.

His letter followed former Tory now Labour MP Christian Wakeford's statement in parliament demanding Waters' cancellation, and Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan sending representatives to the city's O2 arena to "to express the concerns and issues raised by

the Jewish community.”

Not one Labour MP has voiced opposition. The silence grows loudest around Corbyn and his allies in the Socialist Campaign Group, themselves tarred as anti-Semites and who presented themselves as leading defenders of the Palestinians and of Assange alongside Waters. Having bowed before and been complicit in the anti-Semitism witch-hunt of their own supporters so as not to clash with the Labour leadership, they will not take up a defence of Waters.

The Labour left’s prostration before the Blairites has allowed the anti-Semitism witch-hunt—equating opposition to the State of Israel with hatred of Jews—to flourish, handing the ruling class a powerful weapon. The treatment of Waters proves that the purpose of the campaign always went beyond targeting Corbyn and was directed towards the intimidation of all left-wing, anti-imperialist sentiment.

While Starmer’s letter came at the prompting of the BoD, he required no pressuring to denounce Waters. A former Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) of the Crown Prosecution Service, tasked with protecting the agents of British imperialism from legal sanction and punishing its enemies, the Labour leader is a state man through and through.

Acting on behalf of the British and American security services, he oversaw the arbitrary detention of Assange in London under threat of seizure by the UK police. As a politician he leads his party in supporting the journalist’s onward extradition to the US to face life imprisonment under the Espionage Act for exposing war crimes and human rights abuses.

Assange’s persecution was central to the imperialist war drive which has now broken out in a de facto NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which Starmer backs to the hilt as head of what he boasts is “the party of NATO”. While pledging to continue, if not extend, every aspect of the Tory government’s commitment to the imperialist war effort, the Labour leader’s chief role has been to suppress any trace of popular opposition—blackguarding the Stop the War Coalition and all critics of NATO.

When this agenda is challenged, as by Waters, Starmer instinctively responds like a police state official without the faintest trace of democratic gloss.

The assault on democratic rights is becoming more severe as the war crisis deepens and the wave of class

struggle in Britain and internationally unleashed by the cost-of-living crisis spreads. Assange remains held in Britain’s maximum-security prison and at imminent risk of extradition. Publishers and journalists such as Kit Klarenberg are being detained at British borders under counter-terror laws for their involvement in popular protests, or for investigative reporting exposing NATO lies.

Waters’ treatment is also of a piece with the jingoistic banning of Russian sportspeople and artists. Dissent around the NATO-Russia war, or anything which threatens to undermine the blanket demonisation of Russians, is off limits because the ruling class fears that these views—quarantined by the corporate media—will find a mass audience among workers being told to bear the costs of a conflict whose dangers escalate daily.

Starmer is advancing himself as the point man of this dictatorial lurch amid the ongoing crisis in the ruling Tory Party, centred on Brexit divisions in the ruling class but fuelled by fear of the restive mood in the British working class. The Labour leader offers the ruling class a safe pair of hands to guide British imperialism through the greatest crisis of world capitalism since the Second World War and the inevitable revolutionary explosions this will unleash.



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