

# UK Labour Party threatens to expel members protesting Israel's genocidal war

Laura Tiernan  
15 October 2023

The Labour Party has issued a directive to all party branches warning that any public expression of opposition to Israel's war against Gaza will be met with disciplinary action, including expulsion.

General Secretary of the Labour Party David Evans contacted secretaries of Constituency Labour Party (CLP) and local branches Friday, ahead of mass protests in defence of the Palestinian people.

Evans warned, "Elected representatives have been given strong advice not to attend any of these events, and I would urge you to exercise similar caution." This outrageous edict was to ensure party members did not share a platform with, or stand close to, "individuals that threaten to undermine the values and principles of the labour party."

London's mass protest on Saturday, "March for Palestine – End the violence – End Apartheid", was joined by more than 150,000 people, with thousands more demonstrating across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Evans wrote, "I ask that no Labour Party banners be taken along."

Labour's venom toward global protests in defence of the Palestinians did not stop there. Evans announced that any motions tabled at CLPs or local branches against Israel's war crimes "will be ruled out of order".

He declared, "The party's leadership has been clear that Labour fully supports Israel's right to defend itself, rescue hostages, and protect civilians, in line with international law." But Israel's collective punishment against Palestinian civilians is in naked violation of international law.

Gaza's population of 2.3 million people faces destruction as Israel's military—armed and financed by the US and Britain—pummels civilian targets amid a genocidal blockade depriving Palestinians of water, food and electricity. Israel has severed all internet connections in Gaza, preventing Palestinians from speaking to the world.

The Labour Party has announced its own information blockade. Evans declared that social media accounts must not be used "to promote statements or events that are likely to bring the party into disrepute" and that "abusing someone

online is completely unacceptable". He left no doubt about the meaning of Labour's diktat, directing secretaries to the party's code of conduct that defines opposition to Zionism as anti-Semitism, providing a trigger to expel members who publicly oppose Israeli war crimes. He urged CLP and local secretaries to report any breach of party rules to Labour's witch-hunting compliance unit.

Evans' letter stated that any instance of "anti-Semitism" (as defined by Labour's compliance unit) should be reported to the Community Security Trust (CST), a body he described as a charity "that protects Jews from anti-Semitism" and which "is recognised by police and government as a unique model of best practice". The CST is in fact a front group for the Zionist state.

## Young Labour leader resigns over Starmer's support for war crimes

Labour's call for a crackdown on internal dissent was given its head by leader Sir Keir Starmer who used media interviews over the past week surrounding the party conference in Liverpool to demand full support for Israel's genocidal war.

On Wednesday, Starmer told LBC radio that Israel's military response to action by Hamas fighters was proportionate, declaring, "Israel has the right to do everything that it can to get those hostages back safe and sound, therefore I'm very clear Israel must have, does have that right to defend herself and Hamas bears responsibility."

LBC's Nick Ferrari asked, "A siege is appropriate? Cutting off power? Cutting off water?" To which Starmer replied, "I think that Israel does have that right."

On BBC *Newsnight*, Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry backed Starmer to the hilt. Asked, "Do you think cutting off food, water and electricity is within international law?", she replied, "I think that Israel has an absolute right

to defend itself against terrorism.”

Challenged by the BBC’s Victoria Derbyshire, who insisted, “That’s not the question that I asked”, Thornberry was unwavering: “It is an appropriate answer to the question that you’ve asked.”

Labour’s embrace of crimes comparable to those of the Nazis during World War II is fuelling mass opposition, even among previously loyal Labour members. On Thursday, Lubaba Khalid, Young Labour’s National Executive BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) officer, resigned from the party.

Khalid published her resignation letter on Twitter/X on Thursday. She wrote: “As a Palestinian, with direct family in Gaza, I am absolutely appalled by the comments made to LBC by the leader of the Labour Party and my local MP, Keir Starmer, who said that Israel ‘has the right’ to withhold water and electricity. Collective punishment is a war crime under international law. This position was then reaffirmed by Emily Thornberry.

“I have spent the last few days worried about the safety of my family and with electricity now cut off and communication limited these worries are only exacerbated. I have received zero support from the Labour Party—a common theme experienced by other Muslim and Palestinian members.”

She concluded, “The comments from the leadership this week have been the last straw. I can only conclude that the Labour Party is no longer a safe space for Palestinians and Muslims.”

Khalid’s resignation letter has been viewed more than 3 million times and liked by more than 41,000 people. Her family is from Gaza’s Nuseirat refugee camp, struck repeatedly by Israeli missiles.

Khalid’s resignation raises fundamental political issues. She was voted to Young Labour’s national executive last year, part of a slate of candidates from campaign group Momentum, named Socialist Future. She said in her election statement, “I have long considered the Labour Party my political home.” She continued, “I’m standing to build an empowered, campaigning socialist youth wing that is unafraid to stand up for the communities we represent”, insisting, “Our organising must be anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and committed to global liberation.”

But Khalid’s resignation will instead reinforce the conclusions being drawn by millions of workers and young people about the real character of the Labour Party.

Between 2015 and 2016, more than 180,000 workers and youth joined Labour to support Jeremy Corbyn who promised a fight against the pro-war and austerity policies championed by the Blairites. The Momentum group played a key role in promoting Corbyn. As WSWS explained in 2015

: “Momentum is perpetrating a fiction: namely that the Labour Party ‘can transform our society for the better,’ rather than being an obstacle to such a change.”

Corbyn betrayed his thousands of supporters, ceding to the Blairites on every issue. On becoming leader he resigned as Chairman of Stop the War Coalition, backed a free vote in parliament to bomb Syria, reaffirmed Labour’s support for NATO, endorsed Trident nuclear weapons and instructed Labour-run councils to enforce Tory budget cuts. Momentum’s founder Jon Lansman backed the bogus campaign against “left-wing anti-Semitism” used to remove Corbyn as party leader. Corbyn opposed any mobilisation of the membership to defeat the Blairites’ witch-hunt, insisting that the right-wing’s attack dogs were part of Labour’s “broad church”.

The Socialist Equality Party solidarized itself with the leftward sentiments in the working class in 2015, but explained that those hoping Corbyn would “provide an alternative to austerity will be cruelly disappointed. The real measure of his campaign must be judged not on stated intentions, but on the essential criterion of the class interests served by the party and the programme he defends. Labour is a right-wing bourgeois party. It is complicit in all the crimes of British imperialism and has functioned as the principal political opponent of socialism for more than a century ...” [*What does the “Jeremy Corbyn phenomenon” represent?* (August 15, 2015)]

The ruthless crackdown on support for the Palestinians against Israel’s genocidal war—part of an expanding imperialist war encompassing NATO’s proxy-war against Russia in Ukraine and military confrontation against China—represents the collapse of all efforts to reform the Labour Party and pressure it to the left. Its essential role as a party of imperialist war and political reaction is being confirmed in the eyes of millions.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**