

# Mass opposition emerges to Sir Keir Starmer's support for Israeli war crimes as UK Muslims desert Labour Party

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Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer's support for Israel war crimes in Gaza has provoked an avalanche of opposition from millions of people in Britain.

Last Wednesday, Starmer told LBC Radio, "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." Host Nick Ferrari asked, "A siege is appropriate? Cutting off power? Cutting off water?" Starmer replied, "I think that Israel does have that right."

Following Israel's bombing of the Al-Ahli Arabi Baptist hospital on Monday, Starmer tweeted at 9.35pm that evening, "The scenes of hundreds killed at the Al-Ahli Arabi Baptist hospital in Gaza are absolutely devastating and cannot be justified. International law must be upheld. Hospitals and civilian lives must be protected."

Starmer's pro-forma statement that did not even mention Israel, or its brutal assault, met with a torrent of hostile comments, with close to 12,000 posted in direct response, overwhelmingly supportive of the Palestinians. Comments included, "Hypocrite", "Resign", "Crocodile tears", "You encouraged it", "You promoted it", "You stood on the wrong side of history. You and Rishi Sunak are equally responsible", "You have blood on your hands", "You are a genocide and war crimes enabler. Without doubt you should be dragged to the international criminal courts and tried like a criminal."

Some of these responses were themselves retweeted multiple tens of thousands of times, with overall views of the Starmer tweet and those opposed reaching more than 6.6 million in under 24 hours.

After shedding a few crocodile tears over the hospital bombing deaths in parliament at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday, Starmer again went along with Rishi Sunak's government declaration that there should

be "no rush to judgement" as to who bombed the hospital, asking only if Sunak had an update on the matter.

A tweet by Starmer following PMQs made no mention of the hospital bombing, stating, "In this time of grave crisis, Westminster must speak with one voice. Against terror. In support of Israel's right to self-defence."

Starmer's doubling down on his support for Israeli war crimes now directly threatens his leadership of the Labour Party and places the election of a Labour government next year, widely predicted just weeks ago, in question.

The immediate political fallout is devastating. Such is the crisis that Labour could soon lose control of one of its city council strongholds, Leicester, for the first time in 16 years. Labour has controlled the council of the East Midlands city, which has a population of more than 357,000, for 43 of the last 50 years. The *Telegraph* reported, "Last week, seven of the city's Muslim councillors published a letter 'unequivocally distancing' themselves from Sir Keir's remarks and urging him to apologise." An "insider" said Labour's representatives were "coming 'under huge pressure' from constituents to resign the whip over the Labour leader's stance." The source said, "I have never seen so much disdain from the local Muslim voting public towards the Labour Party as I have done over this week... This has gone beyond difficult."

Leicester would only be the beginning. Labour has more than 6,300 Labour councilors in England, Scotland and Wales. Among the more than 500 councillors of all parties identifying as Muslim, 75 percent represent the Labour Party.

In Walsall, just 50 miles from Leicester in the West Midlands, nine Muslim councillors signed a statement October 11 declaring their opposition to the "leader of the Labour Party's failure to reject Israel's collective

punishment of civilians in Gaza”.

Labour has historically enjoyed overwhelming support among Muslims who make up a significant proportion of the UK population. The numbers identified as “Muslim” increased from 4.9 percent of the population (2.7 million) in the 2011 census to 6.5 percent (3.9 million) in 2021. Many live in the major towns and cities where Labour’s electoral support is concentrated. According to a Survation analysis, 86 percent of Muslims said they had voted Labour in the most recent General Election, in 2019.

The *Telegraph* reported, “There are 31 constituencies held by Labour MPs with predominantly Muslim communities, of which 17 are represented by frontbenchers. MPs who could be under threat at the next election include Angela Rayner, the deputy leader and Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary. Shabana Mahmood, Lucy Powell, Liz Kendall and Jonathan Ashworth, all members of the shadow cabinet, also represent such seats.”

Several Labour councillors, not all Muslims, have already resigned.

Two councillors in Oxford quit last week, denouncing Starmer’s “horrifying rhetoric”. Asima Shaikh, from London’s Finsbury Park district, also stood down. A councillor in the Ardwick district of Manchester, Anna Abdullatif quit, stating she had “no choice other than to resign the Labour whip and resign from the Labour party due to Keir Starmer and a number of his senior frontbench making horrifying comments about Israel having the right to withhold fuel, water, food and electricity from the 2.2 million Palestinians trapped in Gaza, effectively endorsing a war crime”.

Others who have quit include Gloucester City Councillor Usman Bhaimia, Jessie Hoskin who represented Cainscross on Stroud District Council, Mairéad Healy from the Romsey ward at Cambridge City Council, and two Labour representatives in Nottinghamshire, Russell Whiting at Gedling Borough Council and Nadia Farhat at Nottingham City Council.

The *Telegraph* reported, “David Lammy, the shadow foreign secretary, held a video call with Labour council leaders from around the UK on Monday night in an attempt to quell the rebellion. But the talks were said to have gone badly, with participants warning that Sir Keir had days to change his approach or face more resignations.”

The desertion of Labour councillors is dwarfed by the scale of hostility aroused by Starmer and his fellow

political criminals. In another indication of the mass opposition, thousands of Muslim councillors, imams, doctors, King’s Counsel and other professionals have signed an open letter to Starmer, noting the “unwavering determination by Israel to obliterate Gaza, resulting in immense suffering and loss of life. Your public support for these actions raises concerns, including supporting international war crimes.”

It adds, “Your statement on the evening of 14/10/2023 [in which Starmer defended Israel’s move to deny water, electricity and humanitarian aid to the besieged residents of Gaza] has exacerbated these concerns, seemingly disregarding the real and grave possibility of ethnic cleansing in Gaza.”

It concludes, “If these concerns are not adequately addressed, your position as the Leader of the Labour Party will become untenable for the Muslim community. We are deeply saddened to convey that, in such circumstances, Muslims will not vote for the Labour Party in the next General Election should you remain Leader.”

Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets to oppose Israeli genocide and in defence of the Palestinians, only to be denounced as “supporters of terrorism” and threatened with mass arrests by the Conservative government. This has only reinforced the hatred of millions towards the Tories. Now over six million people have taken an active part in a discussion of Labour’s war crimes, demands for Starmer’s political scalp and calls to break with the party described earlier by Young Labour’s National Executive Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic officer Lubaba Khalid as “no longer a safe space for Palestinians and Muslims.”

The political parties upholding capitalist rule in Britain, their hands dripping with blood, have discredited themselves irrevocably in the eyes of millions. Britain is drawing ever closer to an eruption of social opposition and radicalisation that will produce a fundamental political realignment in the working class on an anti-imperialist and socialist axis.



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