

UK: Hundreds protest outside Wes Streeting's constituency office against Labour's support for genocide

Our reporters
6 November 2023

On Sunday, hundreds of residents gathered outside the Ilford North Constituency Labour Party office of Wes Streeting MP, denouncing the Labour Party's support for Israel's genocidal attack on 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza.

Entire families joined the protest, waving homemade placards declaring, "End apartheid!", "Ceasefire NOW!", "Stop genocide!" and "Be silent when kids sleep, not when they die!" Their impassioned chants and show of flags won support from passing motorists.

Muhammad Rehan Saeed, a local resident who helped organise the rally, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "We're here to say to Wes Streeting: We've got the names of all the dead here in front of us, we've printed them out. This is only 6,747 dead. The latest figure is 11,000."

Pointing to a metres-long banner listing the names of those killed by Israel in just nineteen days, Mahammad explained, "We've got the names of the babies and the kids killed, in red at the top, going almost to the halfway point. We've got the names of the pensioners killed, in purple towards the bottom. And we've had to use size 7 font, three columns on each page. That's the level of atrocities we are talking about here."

"We've had more people killed in nineteen days than the Ukraine war has had in two years. We've had more people killed than the Srebrenica genocide. We're here to say no! Wes Streeting is supporting this."

Streeting, the shadow health secretary, is a key backer of party leader Sir Keir Starmer who has declared Labour's "unconditional" support for Israel's "right to defend itself", endorsing a barbaric military bombardment and collective punishment against Palestinian civilians and opposing a ceasefire.

Muhammad said, "We're former Labour Party

members. We saw how corrupt Wes Streeting's Labour Party and Keir Starmer's Labour Party is from the inside."

He explained that accusations of anti-Semitism had been used to persecute party members opposed to the crimes of the Israeli state, "I know Jewish people in the Labour Party who have been expelled for being anti-Zionist. There's one member in Ilford, Diana Neslen. She's an elderly lady. She's from South Africa and has fought apartheid twice—once in South Africa, and in Israel now, and they tried to expel her for anti-Semitism."

Sunday's demonstration gave expression to the fury among working people over Labour's naked support for genocide. A local emcee told the rally that residents have "had enough" and that Streeting and other Labour MPs were refusing to represent the views of those who elected them.

He demanded of Streeting, "You must speak out against genocide!... Enough is enough. I don't know how many more children need to die before Wes Streeting can call for a ceasefire." Those assembled chanted "ceasefire now!" and "Keir Starmer: Shame on you!"

Protestors interjected that they would never again vote Labour, with the emcee responding, "When you think of Labour, what do you think of?" The crowd responded in unison: "Genocide!" As numbers at the protest swelled, the chants included, "Starmer: Resign!" and "Streeting: Out!"

Many joining the protest had been supporters of former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. But Corbyn refused to mobilise his supporters to defeat Labour's right-wing, insisting that the party is a "broad church" uniting left and right. He refused to defend his closest supporters against manufactured charges of anti-Semitism, retaining support for NATO and nuclear weapons in Labour's manifesto

and allowing a free vote on the bombing of Syria. His capitulation paved the way for Starmer.

Streeting personifies the party's ruthless programme of imperialist war abroad and class war against the working class at home. He has long championed privatisation of the National Health Service and is widely regarded as a future party leader.

Sunday's rally followed a protest by students at nearby Beal High School who boycotted their assembly on Friday after learning Streeting was due to speak. A large group of senior students refused to attend, while others walked out, forcing the head teacher to draft in junior students to make up the numbers.

On Sunday, rally organisers called on Streeting to issue an immediate statement calling for a ceasefire, declaring, "Wes Streeting, I hope you are listening."

Streeting's answer came just hours later on Twitter/X: "In politics, it can be too easy to reach for slogans, especially to please the crowd, but it's our responsibility to reach for real solutions." He linked to a written statement reaffirming his support for Israel's war crimes, including collective punishment.

He explicitly justified Israel's targeting of schools, hospitals and refugee camps, declaring, " Hamas have said, through their spokespeople in the media, that they intend to carry out similar attacks again and again until Israel is destroyed. That is why Israel's right to self-defence extends to taking out Hamas' capability to inflict further harm."

Streeting repeated the fascist rantings of Israeli generals that Hamas is using the Palestinian people as "human shields". He doubled down on his opposition to a ceasefire, claiming the UK had "only a degree of influence", which should be used "to urge Israel to exercise restraint and act within international law." He reiterated Starmer's meaningless call for a "humanitarian pause".

Sura and **Nuha**, sisters from Iraq, were among those protesting outside Streeting's office. Sura said, "I am disgusted with the Labour Party. I have been for some time, but now so much more so. I am appalled by the reaction of Wes Streeting, Keir Starmer and frankly by all international governments to the genocide in Gaza."

Nuha said, "Wes Streeting is a hypocrite. He is part of Labour Friends of Israel and supports Zionism and was always vocal about it and barely ever mentioned the crisis in Palestine. Now with the Israeli attack on Gaza he has been a blatant advocate for the crimes taking place in Palestine. He said only a few years ago that there would

be no peace in the Middle East unless they talked to groups like Hamas. Now he says that he won't talk with terrorist groups."

Sura said, "How can you be a shadow health secretary and stand by and watch the tragedies taking place? Look at the government's, the Labour Party and the mass media's reaction to the Ukraine war against Russia and the Israeli war against Palestine. It is so blatantly hypocritical. They are supposedly in Ukraine to defend democracy and human rights. If that were the case, why don't they do the same in Palestine?"

An extensive discussion developed on the role of the Labour Party as a pro-imperialist party throughout the 20th century, including its role in the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The Labour Party under Tony Blair was responsible for the murder of one million Iraqis.

Nuha and Sura agreed that Labour under Starmer is no different and that it can't be pressured to change course. Nuha said, "I have read that there are huge resources off the coast of Gaza. This is what governments want, the resources of the Middle East."

Told about the call of the Palestinian trade unions for global strike action in defence of the Palestinians to paralyse Israel's war machine, the sisters responded, "That is the way to go, taking industrial action. Everyone has to do this. There is a lot of scaremongering, trying to frighten people, but people are pushing back. I read about the tube driver who called solidarity and peace for Palestine. He was suspended. People are scared for their jobs, but if we all unite together we could change things, instead of being isolated."

Socialist Equality Party members at Sunday's rally distributed an appeal for this Thursday night's meeting in Holloway: "Stop Israel's genocide on Gaza!" The meeting will discuss what political strategy is needed by the international working class to halt the greatest crimes of imperialism since World War II. We invite workers and young people from Ilford and across London to attend.



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