

Over 800,000 march in London against Gaza massacre, but are given no way forward by march organisers

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At least 800,000 people marched in London on Saturday to protest Israel's war of genocide against Gaza. The rallies in the UK capital have grown larger by the week, going from 100,000, to 350,000, to half a million to this weekend's huge total—with some estimating over one million participants.

Those attending were determined to defy Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Home Secretary Suella Braverman's attempt to ban the march, on the spurious basis that it coincided with Armistice Day, which commemorates the end of the First World War.

But the rally's organisers, including the Stop the War Coalition and the Palestine Solidarity Committee, have provided no strategy to stop the onslaught on Gaza. They have insisted for weeks that the way forward is to pressure Sunak and Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer to call for a ceasefire. In fact, with over 11,000 killed in Gaza, including more than 4,500 children, Sunak and Starmer have only hardened their insistence that the slaughter continue.

This week's rally was dominated by calls from the platform for Braverman to resign, and for MPs of all parties, including Sunak and Starmer, to sign a motion calling for a ceasefire that will be brought before Parliament next Wednesday by Scottish National Party MPs.

Stop the War Coalition convenor Lindsey German, a leading figure of the pseudo-left Counterfire group, who was presented as “the leader of the anti-war movement,” said, “We are going to hold to account our politicians who refuse to give a ceasefire, and refuse to call for a ceasefire.”

Among these were “again Keir Starmer, who has been an absolute disgrace as a Labour leader, Keir

Starmer, who has said [of the ceasefire motion being voted on next week] he's telling Labour MPs not to vote for that motion. That is an absolute disgrace and I hope every single one of the Labour MPs defies his call because it's absolutely abominable that we're not allowed to call for a ceasefire.”

German concluded that Braverman should be sacked, “and if they [the government] don't want to sack her, they should be sacked as well.” This translates into a call to put Starmer's pro-war, pro-austerity party into government.

Richard Burgon, the secretary of the few dozen-strong Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, was hailed for authoring a non-binding Early Day Motion calling for a “cessation of hostilities,” put forward on October 17 and destined to never be debated, let alone voted on. It has been signed by just 95 MPs from among a cross-party opposition, less than 15 percent of Parliament.

In his speech, Burgon asked protestors to campaign for the support of the same capitalist governments orchestrating or bystanding the genocide. Those marching, he claimed, “were saying to political leaders everywhere: Do everything you can to help save lives, Palestinian and Israeli, to help stop the bombing, to help stop the suffering, to help free the hostages, to stop the war crimes, and to get in the aid so desperately needed in Gaza. And that means our government must call for a ceasefire now.” Sunak, he added, should “strain every sinew and use Britain's vast diplomatic influence to help secure a negotiated ceasefire...”

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, presented by the platform as the “People's Prime Minister,” summed up the bankrupt perspective of the rally leaders

by saying about an assembly stuffed full of warmongers, “next Wednesday our Parliament, the House of Commons, will be voting on amendments to the King’s Speech debate. There are amendments down there on calling for a ceasefire.”

He asked of the rally, “You may not have done it before; email your MP and tell them: ‘Put aside your greed, put aside your cynical calculations of what advances the arms industry, what advances somebody else,’ and simply say this to them, ‘A ceasefire now in Gaza would save thousands and thousands of lives.’”

Corbyn was expelled from the Parliamentary Labour Party by Starmer fully three years ago, while still remaining a party member. But such is his level of political cowardice that he again refused to mention his party leader’s complicity in war crimes.

In fact, of the several Labour Party MPs and members on the platform, only Jess Barnard, a non-MP member of the party’s national executive committee, mentioned Starmer’s name. Her speech was nonetheless geared to convincing criminal bourgeois politicians to act, with Barnard saying it was Starmer’s duty to follow the example of French “President of the rich” Emmanuel Macron’s cynical call for a ceasefire.

Imran Hussain, a Labour MP member of the Socialist Campaign Group, who resigned from Labour’s front bench last week in order to campaign for a ceasefire, also did not mention Starmer. Despite declaring Israel’s war of annihilation “beyond a humanitarian crisis,” and calling it “a breach of international law and a war crime,” Hussain only mentioned his resignation in opaque terms. He did not explain why he remains an MP in a party that supports these crimes.

The same applies to fellow Labour MPs Apsana Begum and Zara Sultana’s performances.

Speaking again at a national anti-Israeli war rally were Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union leader Mick Lynch and the leader of the ASLEF train drivers’ union Mick Whelan—whose members play a critical role in transport and logistics. Neither Lynch, nor Whelan nor any other section of the trade union bureaucracy has done anything to organise the most basic anti-war actions, including the blocking of arms shipments and other material assistance to Netanyahu’s regime of war criminals.

Lynch—fresh from proposing his members accept a rotten sell-out deal to end a bitter 18-month

dispute—underscored the role of the union bureaucracy and even acknowledged that his own union members have been told to continue providing critical support for the UK warships backing up Israel. He said at the rally, “It’s important on this Remembrance week, when the RMT have members serving in the Royal Navy Fleet Auxiliary—on ships in the [Middle East] region... [that] we call on the British government to stop its support of the hostilities.”

Socialist Equality Party members distributed thousands of copies of the WSWS International Editorial Board statement “The way forward in the fight against the genocide in Gaza.” It explains that “the social base for opposing Israel’s war crimes, and the broader imperialist war of which it is a part, is the working class, the vast majority of the world’s population. It is not through appeals to the capitalist states and the parties of the ruling class that the genocide will be stopped, but through the mobilization of that social force which produces all of society’s wealth.”

It concludes:

The mass protests throughout the world express the developing collision between the capitalist ruling elites and the international working class. The transformation of this objective process into a conscious movement for socialism requires the building of a political leadership that has as its aim the conquest of power by the working class, the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism, and the establishment of socialism on a world scale.



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