

UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman sacked and plans far-right campaign from backbenches

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Suella Braverman has been sacked as Britain's home secretary by Conservative government Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. This comes after weeks of her incendiary comments condemning anti-war protestors, and the police for failing to crack down on them hard enough.

Getting fired was clearly Braverman's intention and strengthens her position as the Tory right's leading candidate to challenge Sunak for leadership.

James Cleverly has taken her place, vacating the role of Foreign Secretary, which has been filled by former Prime Minister David Cameron. Having not been an MP since 2016, Cameron was appointed to the House of Lords to allow him to take up the post. He is the first ex-prime minister in half a century to return to the cabinet.

The reshuffle reflects a raging crisis in the Tory government as it confronts overwhelming popular opposition, with a section of the party making increasingly strident demands for a fascistic response.

Braverman forced the issue last week with an article in the *Times* describing protests of hundreds of thousands for a ceasefire in Gaza as “an assertion of primacy by certain groups—particularly Islamists—of the kind we are more used to seeing in Northern Ireland. Also disturbingly reminiscent of Ulster are the reports that some of Saturday's march group organisers have links to terrorist groups, including Hamas.”

Accusing the police of “playing favourites”, she went on, “Right-wing and nationalist protesters who engage in aggression are rightly met with a stern response yet pro-Palestinian mobs displaying almost identical behaviour are largely ignored, even when clearly breaking the law?”

Two thousand fascists took this as a call to arms and went on the rampage in London on Saturday, mostly fighting with police but trying to attack demonstrators. Meanwhile, the ceasefire protest swelled to the second-

largest demonstration in modern British history—over 800,000 people.

Braverman doubled down, taking pains to this time praise the police while denouncing “The sick, inflammatory and, in some cases, clearly criminal chants, placards and paraphernalia openly on display at the march” and insisting, “This can't go on... Further action is necessary.”

Braverman has placed herself at the head of the government's anti-migrant campaign, helming the plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, and revels in attacks on the European Union. She has seized on demands to crush anti-war protests as the spearhead of a campaign to assume unchallenged leadership of the hard right of the Tory Party, now wrapped in a martyr's mantle.

According to the *Guardian*, the New Conservatives faction has already held a meeting to plan a future Braverman leadership run. The *Daily Mail* splashed “Suella comes out fighting” across its Monday front page.

Her sacking indicates nothing more than tactical disagreements between Braverman and Sunak's leadership on the need to repress popular opposition. The conflict is over timing and the need to properly prepare such an offensive, including by not alienating the Metropolitan Police and angering sections of the Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Making clear his intentions, Sunak's office briefed several newspapers ahead of Braverman's sacking that he would be personally spearheading a plan to suppress the protests. The *Times* ran the story under the headline, “Arrest antisemitic yobs now, Rishi Sunak will tell the police”.

It reports, “Rishi Sunak will urge the Metropolitan police commissioner to immediately arrest protesters seen using antisemitic slogans as he plans to make

prosecutions for glorifying terrorism easier.

“The prime minister is drawing up a five-point package allowing police to prohibit provocative chants as a condition of allowing protests, and to take into account the ‘cumulative effect’ of weeks of marches in deciding on a ban.”

Met Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley has repeatedly requested extended powers of arrest. He is expected to tell Sunak that a heavier hand would have been used against Saturday’s march if Braverman had not whipped up a far-right mob armed with knuckle dusters and knives, who occupied his officers’ attentions.

Sunak’s challenge is to push this agenda through in the face of massive popular hostility, following a strike wave and amid a protest movement that have shaken the government. His replacement of Braverman and shift of Cleverly mark the 11th and 12th reappointments of the Great Offices of State—the prime minister, chancellor, home and foreign secretaries—since September last year.

Boris Johnson was forced out of office by his own MPs who believed popular outrage over his murderous record during the pandemic was undermining the ruling class’s ability to wage imperialist war abroad and stepped-up class war at home. But they have since been unable to find a better replacement, with each new attempt further delegitimising an already despised government.

Liz Truss’s disastrous 44-day premiership, courtesy of the party’s raving right-wing membership, prompted a selection of the next Tory leader and British prime minister by 357 MPs, with Sunak selected as the safest pair of hands. To soothe the markets and international investors, he appointed Jeremy Hunt as chancellor—one of the most senior and prominent figures of the Cameron-era government.

This was already desperate, with Hunt closely associated with post-2008 austerity and, as health secretary, with the further privatisation of the National Health Service. Now Sunak has reached for Cameron himself, the man notorious for announcing the “age of austerity,” who lost office after determining that a referendum would be held on Britain’s membership of the European Union—a plan to “lance the boil” of the Brexit wing of his party which ended in their victory.

Not even an MP, Cameron has a popular mandate of one—his appointer Rishi Sunak, himself an unelected prime minister—and cannot participate in the House of Commons.

Between them, Cameron’s appointment and Braverman’s self-imposed sacking sum up the trajectory

in the ruling class. Unable to maintain the faintest trace of democratic legitimacy, it is turning rapidly to repression and dictatorship.

That it can do so in the face of such enormous popular opposition is thanks to the Labour Party, the trade union bureaucracy and the political organisations which orbit them like the Stop the War Coalition (STWC). Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and the leading trade union general secretaries like Mick Lynch have fiercely policed the political activity of the working class, preventing any struggle to bring down the government. At all times they have set their sights on a Labour government only when the Tories deign to call a general election, so as to engineer a smooth transition that safeguards their shared agenda of austerity and war.

At the rally in London on Saturday, speaker after speaker placed the focus on ousting Braverman and convincing MPs, including Starmer and Sunak, to back a ceasefire. An array of Labour “lefts”, headed by Jeremy Corbyn, were given prominence to reinforce the claim that Starmer’s “party of NATO” can be made to respond to pressure when the vast majority of protesters despise Starmer and company for their naked support for Israel’s genocide.

STWC convenor Lindsey German commented on Braverman’s removal that it “should be welcomed by all who reject her divisive politics ... Our march demanded an immediate ceasefire in Israel and Gaza, which the Liberal Democrats have now also done. Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak must now follow suit.”

The effect of this perspective is to neuter the mass protest movement by directing all involved towards appeals to parliament and the parties of the ruling class rather than a political struggle against them. Its impact is to give space to the Tory party and the state to prepare a vicious counterattack.

This cannot be allowed to take place. The Socialist Equality Party is campaigning at the protests, workplaces and universities for a socialist solution to the crisis of the ruling class: the revolutionary mobilisation of workers and young people against the genocide and plans for a wider war in the Middle East.



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