

UK Parliament rejects ceasefire in Gaza: For an anti-war movement based on the working class!

Socialist Equality Party (UK)
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Parliament's overwhelming rejection of a ceasefire in Gaza Wednesday evening confirmed that no end to the war can be secured by appealing to the UK's Tory government and Labour opposition.

The first vote of any kind on Israel's genocidal assault, the response to the Scottish National Party's (SNP) amendment calling for a ceasefire was a resounding No, with 293 against and 125 in favour. A large portion of the Tory Party's 350 MPs were not even required to cast a vote to defeat the motion.

After five weeks of mass murder of civilians, close to three quarters (142) of Labour MPs followed party leader Sir Keir Starmer's order to abstain, lending their support to the Tory government and Israel. Only 56 voted for a ceasefire.

The motion itself was a capitulation to Israel's claims of "self-defence" and a "just war." Beginning with the ritual condemnation of Hamas, it avoided accusing Israel of committing genocide, ethnic cleansing and war crimes—only calling on the government "to uphold international law" and "join with the international community in urgently pressing all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire."

When it came to backing Ukraine against Russia in a de facto war waged by NATO, members who voted for a ceasefire on Wednesday were prepared to support supplying weapons to the far-right forces in the Ukrainian army, sanctions intended to cripple the Russian economy and demands that Putin and his leading supporters be tried for war crimes. But their response to Israel's genocidal campaign is a polite request to the fascists in Benjamin Netanyahu's war cabinet to stay their hand.

Not one of the Labour MPs who broke with

Starmer's orders in this vote has any intention of breaking with the Labour Party or waging any fight against its pro-genocide majority. Few were thinking about saving anything other than their chances of re-election.

Former shadow frontbencher Jess Phillips, a proud Blairite, is the appropriate figurehead for this pathetic excuse for a rebellion.

Put in power by a constituency which is 20 percent Muslim, Phillips told the BBC, "I don't feel like I am rebelling against the Labour Party... There is no animosity between me and Keir Starmer. I will work every single day to ensure a Labour victory."

The Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs have no intention of challenging the Labour leadership either. They act as a left cover for a viciously right-wing, pro-war party and will never wage a political fight against Starmer, let alone break from this political cesspit.

After five years in charge of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn and his SCG allies handed the party back to the Blairites without a whimper. It is now further to the right than when Corbyn was elected, to the extent that its "left" rump can only muster less of a rebellion against Starmer than that suffered by Tony Blair over Iraq in 2003—when 139 Labour MPs defied the whip.

Corbyn spent his time as leader preventing any reckoning with the Blairites while allowing Labour's support for NATO, nuclear weapons and military intervention against Syria. Making no defence of his closest allies falsely accused of anti-Semitism, he laid the foundations for the McCarthyite witch-hunt of opponents of Zionism's bloody slaughter of the Palestinians.

He now plays the same role from the backbenches, even after Starmer kicked him out of the parliamentary party and prevented his standing again as a Labour MP.

At the national demonstration on Saturday, Corbyn again did not mention Starmer by name, merely telling the hundreds of thousands gathered there to “email your MP... and simply say to them, ‘A ceasefire now in Gaza would save thousands of lives’.”

Without a struggle against the Tory government and its Labour partners in crime, such calls for a ceasefire are so many empty words.

The Socialist Equality Party appeals to workers and young people who have waged a determined struggle in defence of the Palestinians week after week: The mass murder in Gaza cannot be stopped by appeals to parliament or efforts to pressure the Labour Party. The Tories and Labour act as a unified party of ethnic cleansing, genocide and imperialist war.

Defending the Palestinians and defeating the criminal gang up between Israel, Britain and the US demands the mobilisation of the working class in Britain and internationally against all the governments and political parties of the ruling class. The working class can halt Israel’s assault on Gaza by making it impossible to wage it, stopping the production and shipment of arms or any material support to the Israeli army. Strikes and blockades can paralyse the war drive and create the conditions for a political general strike against war that can bring down the Tories.

None of this can be accomplished without a rebellion against the leadership of the trade unions, whose pious speeches at mass demonstrations for a ceasefire cover for their refusal to mobilise their members against the war.

The organisers of the protest movement, the Stop the War Coalition and Palestine Solidarity Campaign, are concealing these fundamental political truths. Labour MPs and trade union leaders are given platform to present themselves, without the slightest challenge, as the most important allies of the Palestinians and leaders of the anti-war movement.

Mick Lynch and Eddie Dempsey of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union have provided the most offensive examples, speaking in support of a ceasefire while defending the participation of their own members in British imperialism’s naval task force sent to support Israel. Dempsey even had the nerve to say this

“auxiliary fleet to the Royal Navy” was there to “help civilian populations” and was proof of the RMT’s special concern for peace.

There is no time to lose. Hundreds of Palestinians are being slaughtered every day, while the US prepared for an attack on Iran that will open up a Middle Eastern front in an escalating war targeting Russia and China. The imperialist governments are meanwhile preparing savage repression of opponents of their filthy war at home, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak discussing measures for mass arrests and the banning of protests with the police.

The new leadership of the anti-war movement must be a socialist leadership. The worldwide movement against the assault on Gaza, bringing millions to the streets around the world, represent an initial eruption of mass anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist sentiment. This provides the basis for a broad revival of the socialist ideas and traditions of international class struggle which the October Revolution in 1917 proved is the sole means of bringing an end to war.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party founded by Leon Trotsky, fight to build a mass socialist anti-war movement and the new revolutionary leadership necessary for victory.



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