

London's "National March Against Antisemitism" aimed at legitimising Israel's genocide of the Palestinians

Thomas Scripps
28 November 2023

Sunday's "National March Against Antisemitism" was attended by tens of thousands, but far fewer than the organisers initial claim of 60,000 and the subsequent inflated figure in some newspapers of 100,000.

Whatever passing pretence was made of concern for peace and joint opposition to antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the deaths of Jews and Palestinians, the real character of the event was made clear by its organisers, leading speakers, most prominent participants, and the prominent display of Israeli flags and Union Jacks.

Besides Israeli flags, demonstrators carried placards reading, "For Israel, against antisemitism". "Bring them home", referring to hostages taken by Hamas and used to legitimise the Israel Defense Forces slaughter of an estimated 20,000 Palestinians, was the most widely displayed slogan.

Above all, the march was held in support of the grotesque political lie that opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza is equivalent to anti-Jewish hatred. Antisemitism was identified with the mass movement of workers and youth against Israel's military campaign of mass murder and ethnic cleansing, with the "guilty" made up overwhelmingly of Britain's Muslim community and left-wing individuals and groups.

This was spelled out by the lead organiser of the march and head of the Campaign Against Antisemitism Gideon Falter. He told the crowd, referring to the protests against the genocide, "Week after week, central London has become a no-go zone for Jews.

"We have witnessed mass criminality, including glorification of terrorism, support for banned terrorist organisations such as Hamas, and incitement to racial or religious hatred against Jews. The sad truth is that Jews do not feel safe in our capital city."

Calling for state repression, he went on, "Britain is at an inflection point. If the authorities believe that our streets and our country should be safe for all Britons—including British Jews—they must act against hate before it's too late."

In fact, the biggest cheers at the protests against Israel's war—which have mobilised hundreds of thousands week after week—are routinely given for Jewish groups and individuals

taking a stand under the banner of "Never again means never for anyone". Many of these left-wing, anti-war Jews have been denounced in the foulest of terms by Zionists, whipped up by the likes of Falter.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism spearheaded the witch-hunt of Labour members on false charges of "left antisemitism" during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership—a campaign he refused to fight. Amid a torrent of slurs and slanders, members of Jewish Voice for Labour were abused with terms like "kapo"—a Nazi-appointed Jewish overseer in the concentration camps.

This was repeated on Sunday's march, with demonstrators chanting "Judenrat"—Nazi-appointed Jewish councils overseeing the ghettos—at Orthodox Jewish counter protesters holding Palestinian flags and placards reading, "Israel is responsible for 75 years of tragic bloodshed".

Also speaking were other leading figures in the "left antisemitism" witch-hunt, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and television personality Rachel Riley. She told the crowd, "You need to know next to nothing to propagate Nazi or Soviet Jew-hating propaganda, reframed to fit today's narrative, but you need to know nearly everything in order to combat it. The odds are stacked in the antisemite's favour. We need to re-stack those odds.

"No one should have to risk their safety, jeopardise their career, in speaking against antisemitism in Britain. I call on the people, the media, and politicians on every side to stand with us and be louder against antisemitism."

This turns reality on its head. Among the crowd were BBC journalists who claimed they were attending in defiance of a direction not to from the broadcaster, some of them carrying placards reading "BBC muzzles journalists" and "Not my BBC". All of which would have got them sacked immediately if done at a protest in defence of the Palestinians.

Joining them were Tory defector and now Labour MP Christian Wakeford, as well as MPs and government ministers from the ruling Conservative Party—Tom Tugendhat, Robert Halfon and Robert Jenrick. All of them vociferous backers of Israel's massacre in Gaza.

The media afforded pride of place to the disgraced former

prime minister, responsible for mass death during the COVID pandemic, Boris Johnson.

This notorious racist is infamous for his description of black babies as “picaninnies”, calling travellers “pikeys”, and describing Muslim women in burqas as “letterboxes”. In 2004 he wrote a novel, “Seventy-Two Virgins”, about a fictional terror attack in which a prominent Palestinian character turns out to be a terrorist and Russian support for the US is said to be the result of “some kind of fiddling of the figures by the oligarchs who ran the TV stations (and who were mainly, as some lost no time in pointing out, of Jewish origin)...”

Faced with such an openly right-wing event, the events organisers tried to lend the march some progressive credentials by drawing an obscene comparison with the 1936 Battle of Cable Street.

On October 4 that year, British fascist leader Oswald Moseley staged a provocative march of his British Union of Fascists (BUF) through an area of the East End of London with a large Jewish population. Protected by the police, they were stopped by a mass mobilisation of over 100,000 local workers and left-wing organisations.

Where Cable Street saw broad layers of the working class mobilised in defence of Jews and other minorities against the far-right admirers of Adolf Hitler, Sunday saw a Zionist core join arms with right-wing politicians and media editors in defence of a state waging a genocidal war. The most galling reference to 1936 came in the glowing front-page write-up given to the demonstration in the *Daily Mail*, a paper which two years before Cable Street published the headline “Hurrah for the Blackshirts” and advised “young men” on how they could join Moseley’s BUF.

Confirming the march’s real political character, English fascist leader Tommy Robinson was determined to attend and show his support for the mass murder of Muslims in the name of national self-defence. He was only prevented from doing so because march organisers, mindful of the public impression this would give, had insisted he be barred by police, who arrested Robinson when he refused to leave.

Such open association with the far-right has not been balked at by Zionist organisations elsewhere. A similar “march against antisemitism” in France on November 12 was attended by Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Rally, formerly the National Front, founded by her father and convicted Holocaust denier Jean-Marie. On Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed Elon Musk, promoter of the antisemitic Great Replacement Theory, to Israel.

These and Sunday’s events confirm the analysis given by chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site* David North in his recent lecture in London of Zionism’s inherent association with nationalist and increasingly far-right ideas:

“Zionism, which emerged as an offspring of

imperialist colonialism and as an enemy of socialism and a scientific conception of history and society, necessarily based itself on the most reactionary elements of nationalist politics and ideology.

“In an epoch in which the driving force of social progress had become the revolutionary struggle of the international working class against capitalism and the bourgeois national state, Zionism based its program on the glorification of the national principle as the essential foundation of Jewish existence. All conceptions of history, stemming from the Enlightenment and the later socialist movements, that undermined the principle of national exclusivity—especially those which, on the basis of science and reason, viewed national identity as a historically limited and transitory phenomenon connected to a specific stage in the development of the productive forces and their relation to the world market—were thereby denounced as incompatible with Zionism, not only as a political program but also as the sole expression of Jewish identity. To deny the legitimacy of Zionism was, therefore, to deny the right of Jews to exist.

“From this follows the insidious claim that opposition to Zionism, even if the opponent is a Jew, is antisemitic.”

The Zionists’ deeply harmful insistence that the fate of Jewish people is bound to the state of Israel and requires support for its crimes against the Palestinians represents the main danger of a recrudescence of antisemitism. Those Jewish workers and youth taking a stand against the Gaza genocide point to the only way forward—a political struggle of workers of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds against nationalism and the nation state system, for a world socialist revolution and transformation of society.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact