

Around 100,000 protest in London against US and UK support for Israel's genocide in Gaza

Robert Stevens
10 December 2023

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in London on Saturday to oppose Israel's genocidal destruction of Gaza.

The march assembled in the Bank district of the capital and proceeded alongside the Thames before ending with a rally near Parliament in Whitehall—the seat of the British government.

The event was held after the United States on Friday voted down at the United Nations a resolution calling for a ceasefire. Britain again fell into line with Washington, and refused to support the motion by abstaining, with a Downing Street representative claiming that this was due to the resolution not condemning Hamas.

The demonstration was attended by thousands of young people, following their walkout protests from schools and colleges over the last few weeks in towns and cities.

London's Metropolitan Police again mobilised a mass turnout of officers, putting in place restrictions over a vast portion of London. The Met said during the day that “a dispersal order under Section 35 of the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act is in place until 1am in the area... Anyone in the area who is directed by an officer to leave and fails to do so can be arrested. Also in place and covering the same area were “Orders under Section 60 and Section 60AA of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act... They provide officers with additional search powers to prevent violence/disorder and the power to direct the removal of face coverings.”

By 5pm police had made 13 arrests, “mostly for offensive placards”. The police said, “As the march formed up, officers identified a man with a placard making comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany. He has been arrested on suspicion of a racially

aggravated public order offence.” This was in the same week when millions were shocked by images of Israel Defence Forces soldiers forcing Palestinian prisoners to strip to their underwear, while they watched over them at gunpoint—an act many compared to the humiliations and atrocities committed by Hitler's regime.

Revealing a vast dragnet that the Met and other police forces operate to monitor the population, the Met stated, “Officers working on our specialist 'Voyager' CCTV monitoring team scanning the crowds were able to identify a woman who was wanted for an offence that took place during a protest on 28 October. They guided officers in to make an arrest and the woman is now in custody.”

The rally was introduced with a video of Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, leader of the Palestinian National Initiative, a Palestinian political party. He said, “Israel has entered the third month of its aggression against Gaza. They are using all the forces they have. 11,000 air strikes so far. 45,000 tonnes of explosives have been thrown on Gaza, that is like 17kg for every man, woman and child. They have killed already more than 16,000 people, actually 22,000 killed if you count the ones under the rubble, including no less than 10,000 children. It's a terrible war crime.”

The demonstration was notable for the very few Labour Party representatives present, even compared to the small number at previous rallies. Of sitting Labour MPs only Apsana Begum and John McDonnell were on the platform. Neither mentioned their own party's support for the genocide, and again refused to mention party leader Sir Keir Starmer by name or his backing of Israeli war crimes. McDonnell's speech was bereft of any politics as he read out a letter from himself as a “father and grandfather” to the “dear children” of Gaza, saying “You are not alone, we are your family

now”.

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who now sits as an Independent in Parliament after being expelled from the parliamentary party for over three years for criticising the bogus “left” antisemitism witch-hunt, spoke to the rally. Introduced as the “People’s Prime Minister” Corbyn condemned the US veto of the UN ceasefire motion and Britain’s abstention as a “day of global disgrace”. He said, “western governments... cannot see that they are complicit, complicit, in the killing of so many Palestinian lives by their supply of weapons and their refusal to do anything to demand a ceasefire.”

Corbyn faces no sanction from Starmer for saying anything, as he hasn’t been subject to the party whip for years and shadow cabinet collective discipline stipulations also don’t apply as he has been a backbencher since Starmer took over. But yet again—on a national platform—he refused to even name Starmer or the Labour Party as supporters of genocide, as was confirmed in the November 16 vote in Parliament when close to three quarters of Labour MPs opposed a motion for a ceasefire. Instead Corbyn said, pointing at Westminster, “I say to my colleagues over there in Parliament, ‘shame on you, shame on you, for not being prepared to vote for a ceasefire. Shame on you for doing nothing about the arms trade that fuels this war’.”

This set the scene for the Stop the War Coalition (STWC), co-organisers of the demonstration, to insist that winning the cross-party support of the parliamentary parties of British imperialism was still the over-riding objective of all protest against the carnage in Gaza.

With just 56 Labour MP’s backing a toothless ceasefire motion, and with an election months away, National Education Union executive member Alex Kenny was the first to propose the fiction that Labour could be forced to change its spots while thousands continue to be slaughtered by the Israel Defense Forces: “We know there is going to be a general election next year and I just want to welcome to the stage this banner behind our next speaker Lindsey [German], “No Ceasefire, No Vote.” And that’s what we have to be saying. If you continue to abstain you cannot count on our vote when it comes to the general election.”

German, the convenor of the STWC and a leading

member in the pseudo-left Counterfire group said, “We have a very strong message for the politicians in this country who will not support a ceasefire. Come the election Palestine is on the ballot paper and if there is no vote for a ceasefire, there will be no vote for the politicians that refuse to do it.”

Stop the War enforced the message by reposting an X/formerly Twitter, a posting from German who wrote, alongside a photo of Labour’s warmongering Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy, “Time to step up No Ceasefire no Vote”.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)