

UK Gaza genocide protesters threatened following Labour's sabotage of ceasefire motion

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Britain's ruling elite are demanding stepped-up repression of Gaza genocide protesters.

On Wednesday, Speaker of the House of Commons Sir Lindsay Hoyle conspired with Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer to ensure that a Scottish National Party (SNP) motion for an immediate ceasefire that denounced the collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza was supplanted by one written by Starmer making a ceasefire conditional on Hamas surrendering to Israel.

The move prevented an expected rebellion of up to 90 Labour MPs, who seized on Starmer's weasel formulations as a fig leaf for their continued collusion with Israeli genocide.

Faced with criticism from the SNP and, more importantly, the Conservative government for breaking protocol by moving two opposition motions, Hoyle claimed he had acted because Starmer told him the safety and lives of Labour MPs were under threat from protesters if the party was not seen to back a ceasefire.

On Thursday morning, before Hoyle spoke to parliament, this slander was taken up enthusiastically by Tory MP Mark Francois. Defending Hoyle's actions, he said, "I well remember everything that Mr Speaker [Hoyle] did to help me, and all of us, when our great friend—my best friend—was murdered by, as it happened, an Islamic extremist, who told his trial that he did it because of how [Conservative MP] David [Amess] voted in the House of Commons."

Hoyle responded, "I never, ever want to go through a situation where I pick up a phone to find a friend, on whatever side, has been murdered by a terrorist."

He added, "I have seen, I have witnessed. I will not share the details, but the details of the things that have

been brought to me are absolutely frightening for all Members of the House, on all sides... If my mistake is looking after Members, I am guilty... I had serious meetings yesterday with the police on these issues and on threats to politicians as we head towards an election."

Later, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak took up the theme, while stating that "we should never let extremists intimidate us into changing the way in which parliament works."

Home Secretary James Cleverly then threatened, "If people think that they can target members of parliament, they are wrong. The full force of the law will be brought down."

The right-wing media was already primed for further restrictions on mass opposition to the genocide in Gaza, which is what Starmer made clear is meant by "terrorism", with the *Express* and *Mail* running front-page headlines demanding a clampdown on protests in the seat of government in Whitehall and the immediate vicinity of the parliamentary estate.

The *Express* targeted a protest by thousands of people outside Parliament on Wednesday in support of a ceasefire. The paper cited Tory MP Andre Percy's denunciation of the Metropolitan Police for allowing protesters to beam a "genocidal" phrase onto Big Ben, by which he meant the slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

Other objectionable slogans for the *Express* included the demand "ceasefire now" and "stop bombing Gaza".

Percy, a Jewish MP, was quoted claiming in Parliament, "For months I've been standing up here talking about the people on our streets demanding 'death to Jews', demanding Jihad, demanding intifadas

as the police stand by and allow that to happen. Last night, a genocidal call of ‘From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ was projected onto this building.”

Cleverly’s predecessor Suella Braverman said in a *Telegraph* op-ed column published Thursday evening that “the Islamists, the extremists and the anti-semites are in charge now. They have bullied the Labour Party, they have bullied our institutions, and now they have bullied our country into submission.”

Braverman railed, “We need to overcome the fear of being labelled Islamophobic and speak truthfully. Enough of the hand-wringing and apologies... This is a crisis. And the fightback must start now, with urgency... If we are to have any chance of saving our country from the mob.”

Denunciations of anti-genocide protests as antisemitic, akin to terrorism and threatening the lives of MPs are spewed out to justify a brutal clampdown employing the huge swathe of anti-democratic legislation imposed over the last five years. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has reported, police are using the Terrorism Act and the Public Order Act against the protests, with more than 600 people arrested on demonstrations in the capital over the last four months.

The *Telegraph* reported a call by former Blairite witch-hunter and Labour MP John Woodcock, now Baron Walney and Sunak’s independent adviser on political violence and disruption, for protest exclusion zones, effectively making it impossible to demonstrate anywhere near Parliament or at MPs’ offices in local constituencies. The *Telegraph* wrote, “Lord Walney will use a forthcoming report to urge Rishi Sunak to extend ‘buffer zone’ powers, which currently cover schools and abortion clinics, to constituency surgeries, Parliament and council chambers.”

It notes, “Lord Walney’s review, which was set to be submitted shortly after the Oct 7 attacks but has now been updated, will call for the expansion of expedited public space protection orders.” Backed by MPs in 2022 and approved by the House of Lords last year, the orders empower police “to disperse intimidating protests, which Lord Walney is understood to hope would protect parliamentarians from mobs in their communities.”

Demands were made on chief constables last week by Security Minister Tom Tugendhat and policing minister

Chris Philp to use “the powers that are available” to prevent protests near MPs’ homes. The *Mail* reported, “The two ministers told chief constables that the Government has ‘confirmed that, where the facts support it so the conditions are met, section 42 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 can be used by the police to direct protesters away from a residential dwelling, in order to prevent harassment, alarm or distress to the resident’”.

This is the response of a ruling elite that knows millions of workers and young people despise the Tories and Labour as a single party of war who collectively impose austerity on behalf of big business, and that the demonstrations over Gaza could become the focus of broad movement of a revolutionary character.

Underscoring the class interests dictating Hoyle’s manoeuvre, Starmer said during a factory visit on Thursday that, prior to his discussion with Hoyle to sabotage the SNP ceasefire motion, he had been in discussions with Israeli President Isaac Herzog and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Speaking to Sky News, Starmer said, “The proposition I put on the table in that amendment was crafted by me after I came back from the Munich Security Conference, having spoken to Secretary of State Blinken, having spoken to the prime minister of Qatar, having spoken to the President of Israel. Having spoken to people actually involved in trying to way forward [sic] this awful conflict, I wanted that proposition heard and voted on, and my MPs wanted to vote on it.”

Hoyle himself had visited Israel only in November, as the Israeli onslaught intensified, as a guest of Netanyahu’s government. He boasts that his father “[former Labour] MP Doug Hoyle helped found Labour Friends of Israel.” Over a 110 Labour MPs and Labour members of the House of Lords, including Starmer, are members of this Zionist group.



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