

Bring down Sunak's pro-genocide police state!

For a general election and an anti-war opposition to the Labour and Tory parties!

Chris Marsden, Thomas Scripps
3 March 2024

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative government has declared war on the British working class and all opponents of Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza.

In an extraordinary statement delivered outside Number 10 Downing Street Friday night, Sunak said of peaceful protests for a ceasefire that have mobilised well over a million people: "In recent weeks and months, we have seen a shocking increase in extremist disruption and criminality. What started as protests on our streets, has descended into intimidation, threats, and planned acts of violence."

The dictatorial meaning of his words was made clear when Sunak went on to describe the landslide election to parliament of George Galloway just hours before, on a platform of opposition to the war in Gaza, as "beyond alarming".

Galloway won a 5,600 vote majority in the Rochdale by-election—overturning the Labour Party's almost 10,000 majority—and receiving more ballots than his Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat challengers combined. For the *unelected* British Prime Minister to tell the nation that Galloway's election was illegitimate and part of a threat to "our democracy" was so nakedly hostile to the democratic process that the comment was—ludicrously given that his incendiary statement was televised—almost immediately "redacted" from the official transcript of his statement published on the Downing Street website.

Sunak's speech set out his intention to criminalise opposition to British imperialism, above all its support for the Gaza genocide, and carry out a police-state crackdown on protesters.

While the prime minister claimed to be speaking against "Islamist extremists and the far right", his entire speech was directed against the mass anti-war protests and consisted of repeated denunciations of positions held by workers and left-wing opponents of imperialism that are anathema to the far right.

Announcing an end to the technical separation of police and government decision-making, Sunak threatened, "I respect that the police have a tough job in policing the protests we have

seen and that they are operationally independent. But we must draw a line."

Drawing the line means repressing popular protest. "Yes," Sunak continued, "you can march and protest with passion. You can demand the protection of civilian life. But no, you cannot call for violent Jihad."

He gave the example of "beam[ing] antisemitic tropes onto Big Ben in the middle of a vote on Israel/Gaza." The words projected were "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", "Stop bombing Gaza", "Ceasefire now" and "Stop war now". These sentiments are now forbidden, branded part of a "hateful ideological agenda", equating once more anti-Zionism with antisemitism and "the extremist political ideology of Islamism".

Forbidden is the "call for the eradication of a State", by which is meant opposition to a religiously exclusivist, apartheid Israeli state occupying Palestinian lands, again described by Sunak as antisemitism.

Those who fight for these views will be arrested, deported and expelled from jobs, schools and universities.

He denounced an alleged threat from "small groups... hostile to our values [who] have no respect for our democratic traditions", for their sowing "doubt" about "our country's history and achievement" and for claiming that "our country, and the West more generally, is solely responsible for the world's ills and that we, along with our allies, are the problem."

Areas of special concern were schools, where the targets of Sunak's witch-hunt "tell children that the system is rigged against them or that Britain is a racist country" to "turn impressionistic minds against their own society."

His government would "redouble our support for the Prevent programme," founded by Tony Blair's Labour government after the illegal invasion of Iraq to surveil public institutions and demonise Muslims.

Sunak went on, "We will demand that universities stop extremist activity on campus... The Home Secretary has

instructed that if those here on visas choose to spew hate on protests or seek to intimidate people, we will remove their right to be here.”

Ministers have demanded more aggressive action against the protests for weeks. Students have been arrested and suspended from their universities, and members of left political tendencies arrested on demonstrations. But the government has been increasingly frustrated by the lack of a real offensive against the demonstrations, including bans on marches, more violent policing and a much larger number of arrests.

For the ruling class, such an assault is now essential.

Opposition to Israel’s campaign of mass murder and ethnic cleansing is growing by the day, as famine grips Gaza and the lives of tens if not hundreds of thousands more are imperilled. A catastrophic regional war is threatened, spurred on by the NATO imperialist powers itching to crush Iran even as they drive an escalation of the war in Ukraine, including discussion of the deployment of ground troops that would bring them into direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia.

Most dangerous of all, anger among workers and young people over Gaza is politically directed not only against the Netanyahu regime but its bloodstained accomplices in the Tory and Labour Parties.

As the WSWS explained regarding Galloway’s victory in Rochdale: “politics in Britain is being upended by the imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza and the radicalisation of millions of people, particularly young workers and students. An anti-imperialist, anti-war opposition to the Labour and Tory parties is building and seeking a political solution.”

The pursuit of war abroad means waging war against the working class at home. The economy and the whole of society must be placed on a war footing, necessitating the ever-more brutal exploitation of the working class and the destruction of already eviscerated social provision such as the National Health Service and education.

This is incompatible with the preservation of the most elementary democratic rights. Dictatorship is the order of the day, whichever party rules Britain.

The prime minister’s comments had such a fascistic stink that almost every political party tried to distance themselves from its naked Islamophobia and authoritarian denunciation of peaceful democratic protest. Not so the Labour Party, whose leader Sir Keir Starmer rushed to declare his support.

Sunak was “right to advocate unity and to condemn the unacceptable and intimidatory behaviour that we have seen recently,” insisted Starmer. “Citizens have a right to go about their business without intimidation and elected representatives should be able to do their jobs and cast their votes without fear or favour. This is something agreed across the parties and which we should all defend.”

There has never been such an open identity between the Tory party and the Labour Party, not even when the execrable Blair was prime minister. In the eyes of millions, Sunak and Starmer

are political twins, leaders of two anti-working class, anti-democratic, and overtly pro-business, pro-austerity, pro Zionist, pro imperialist and pro-war parties.

Starmer functions as a Tory prime minister in waiting should popular hostility lead to the downfall of Sunak’s gang of war criminals. Nothing would be changed by their unseating the Tory government in the election due this year.

But the working class cannot allow itself to be paralysed by the united Tory-Labour front. And there can be no waiting until Labour has proved itself as violently hostile to workers’ interests in office as it has been in opposition. Workers and young people must seize the initiative and kick Sunak out of office before he can make good on his threats.

A government which organises a state crackdown to defend a criminal policy it pursues against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the population has no legitimacy. The demand must be raised for an immediate general election.

A national vote forced on parliament in this way over its support for the Gaza genocide would not only disrupt Sunak’s authoritarian agenda; it would create the conditions for the broadest, most militant and politically focused challenge to Starmer’s Zionist “party of NATO.” It would provide a renewed focus for the widespread social and political discontent that gave rise to last year’s strike wave that was betrayed by the trade union bureaucracy now busy championing a Starmer government.

The Socialist Equality Party would campaign in any general election in total opposition to all Labour MPs and any suggestion to vote for them, however many unprincipled caveats they attach to their membership of a self-declared party of British imperialism. It will insist that the only way to oppose war, the slaughter in Gaza and the assault on democratic rights in the UK is the building of a mass, socialist anti-war movement in the international working class.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact