

UK protesters denounce Conservative and Labour support for Israel's genocide, demand freedom for Julian Assange

Our reporters
11 March 2024

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to some of the hundreds of thousands attending Saturday's protest in London against Israel's genocidal onslaught on Gaza. Further interviews from London, Manchester and Inverness are posted below.

London

Katie said, "I have friends in Gaza. I know people who are in tents now who've lost members of their family. Aid can't get through and it's creating a famine situation. It's deeply wrong and we are watching it unfold in front of our eyes. It's deeply disappointing that Labour have allowed it to continue."

Katie opposed Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's slander of anti-genocide protests as the work of "extremists". "I've been to many protests and I haven't seen any [extremism]. People just want to stand on the right side of history and to demand justice. That doesn't mean they're inciting hate. This is supposed to be a democracy and we have to speak out.

Journalist **Gary** said, "If you think this all started on October 7, you just need to do a little bit of research. Just go back a little bit in history and you'll understand why we're all here.

"I'm dressed like this [in the protective gear worn by media workers in warzones] to honour the journalists who risk their lives to show us what's going on in Gaza. It's all in America's hands. They're the force behind it.

"Sunak's speech was disgusting. I've never heard anything as stupid in my life. Saying Jewish kids are walking down the street and feeling scared. How are Palestinian kids feeling?"

Haxhi said, "The Palestinians have nothing to eat! The government is shameful. They want to shut down protests. Where is our freedom? As for [Labour leader] Keir Starmer, he is doing nothing."

Manchester

Kris, a 30-year-old graduate said, "I've been aware of the Palestinian struggles for a few years. It seemed very obscure when I was growing up, and then on October 7 the incursion into Israel has

led to the oppression of the Palestinian people that I haven't seen in my lifetime.

"In 2006 [during Israeli army raids into Gaza and the West Bank] I was a kid and couldn't do much about it, but this time I'm older and aware, and I don't want my tax money spent on funding genocide. I don't want to feel that I did nothing. In times of history like slavery, I wouldn't want to be on the side of the slave owners then and the genocide now.

"We can all see the threats to the democratic process, and it's not about George Galloway personally [Galloway won the Rochdale by-election on a platform of opposition to the Gaza genocide]. Do I agree with George Galloway? No. But do I think it's a good thing to see the establishment getting knocked back. Whoever's knocking Labour and Tory party members out of their seats at the next election I'm all for it.

"The only people getting heard are [party] donors, but when we want to get our voices heard, they say that's a threat to the democratic process. In this system my voice doesn't get heard—but the corporations which fund the parties get heard. That's capitalism, and that doesn't work for us. I think people will start to wake up to that. There will be more threats about how we're upsetting the democratic process, but it shows how afraid they are of a popular movement.

"The Labour Party won't get my vote in the next election. They haven't represented my interests, my values for a long time. Keir Starmer is a regeneration of Tony Blair. All the same rhetoric from the Tories comes out of the mouths of Labour. They're effectively the same party. They're talking all the same points on austerity, on law and order and being tougher on the working class, being tougher on people already in desperate situations.

"Whenever there's a real popular global movement they will try to quell it with acts of war. They will try to get us to all fight a war against the Russians, the Chinese, the Iranians, then we are not going to mobilise at home. This rhetoric of warmongering we're hearing, if we look back in history, we can see it was the same before World War I against the popular women's movement and more rights for children and men. They said let's go and fight a needless war over land conquest.

"We're in the final throes of capitalism, it's getting to the stage where the inequality is worse than ever. Once you could get onto the home ownership ladder but that doesn't exist anymore. The opportunities we get are less and less, and more people are going to turn towards socialism. They won't let it go easily, but we're not going to give up fighting either."

Kris expressed interest in the upcoming public Manchester to outline a strategy to fight for the freedom of Julian Assange. “I fully support freedom of the press. It’s a damning indictment of the western governments of supposedly having democracy and free speech that someone who criticises them and reveals information that they didn’t want is treated like Julian Assange. If the Russian government treated journalists that way, then all the western governments would be up in arms.

“The hypocrisy is far from limited to Julian Assange—the condemning by imperialism of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan only to invade it themselves later. Look at the Israel/Palestine situation and compare it to the Ukraine/Russia situation and see how differently self-determination, self-defence is seen when it’s an ally than when it’s not your ally.

“Yes, Free Julian Assange!”

Teaching assistant **Zeeshan** said he joined the Manchester protest because “I stand for truth, and what is a truly global issue affecting everyone. We are entering a period where human life is increasingly devalued. It’s something we should all stand up against, in our thought, our speech and our action.

“It’s sad to see what’s happening, but at the same time it’s also heartening to see that protests are happening every week to show there are people out there who are awake, who are willing to say no and are offering an alternative.

“The Labour party is part of the establishment. The two-party system is really a one-party system. I’m from Rochdale so I campaigned for George Galloway. That was a turning point in showing how many people are dissatisfied with not only Labour but with British politics.

“What really needs to happen is a campaign across the board that posits a unifying vision that changes not only Britain but the world.

“I do agree with what you say about Jeremy Corbyn, he can’t seem to let go of the Labour Party. In regard to the workers’ movement being Trotskyist, and global, I agree 100 percent. Palestine is a global issue, so is the working class.

“In a time of mass austerity, of political repression increasing day-by-day, standing on a global platform and workers’ struggles are the way to go.”

Inverness

Jana, a 23-year-old student, said, “The police state that Sunak is making is trying to scare people to not speak up, not look into what’s going on. They are trying to keep people ignorant of what’s going on in Palestine, trying to limit or criminalise the information we can receive. Ignorance is not bliss, ignorance kills and I think we should all be as informed as possible about what’s going on.

“They are trying to take away our democratic rights like freedom of speech, they attack our right to protest. The attack on Assange should serve as a warning to us of what they are capable of. But we shouldn’t be scared away. This should make us fight harder.

“We have a duty to defend those who cannot defend themselves. I don’t have to flee into the desert tomorrow just to stay alive, and as long as people are suffering I will come to as many protests as I can, regardless of what Sunak says. The dead cannot speak, but we can.

“I don’t think there is a sustainable future for our generation under

capitalism. We shouldn’t expect the oppressed just to lie down and take it. But we also shouldn’t expect the oppressor to sit still either! We should take action.

“There are so many of us that if we all band together, if we knew our power, we could stop this. We all need to protest and all need to bring them down. Powers like the UK and US are 100 percent complicit in the genocide of the Palestinians.

“These protests are not antisemitic. The government are playing on the horrors of World War II and what happened to the Jews to justify genocide. The support for Palestine has nothing to do with race, religion, gender. This is about humanity, letting people live their lives, opposing war and defending life. There are children in Palestine who will never have a childhood. This has nothing to do with antisemitism.

“They have been putting the prices up on everything, bringing wages down, but all of our public money is being spent on war. Without the working class, they are nothing. That’s why we should band together. We will not roll over and take this.”

Ella, aged 16, said, “It’s so hypocritical for Sunak to say the protests are antisemitic or bigoted. Sunak deliberately incites bigotry all the time with his raft of Islamophobic comments and his support for anti-trans bills! Workers might face huge repercussions for speaking out and be branded antisemitic.

“I support the Socialist Equality Party’s call for workers to bring down the Sunak government. They don’t speak for me; they only defend their own interests. The government are trying to make an example out of Julian Assange because they are preparing more crimes and they don’t want us to speak out.

“Capitalism doesn’t offer an alternative anywhere. Even here, people reach 16 or 18 and find themselves in really difficult situations. If we can find work then it’s not good-paying work, it grinds you down, over-works you and then replaces you like a piece of machinery. That’s not a way to live a life, it’s exploitation.

“They only offer the bare necessities and sometimes not even that. Our generations should have better prospects than genocide and poverty. One of the things that make humans special and unique is our creativity, our art, our ability to produce and create and our knowledge. With the way our society is run, we don’t have avenues to express this, grow this. We’re not allowed to have this.

“People shouldn’t feel frightened to speak out against the genocide. Don’t let their threats intimidate you.”



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