

200,000 attend anti-genocide protest in London, as Israel prepares to destroy Rafah

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More than 200,000 protesters marched in London Saturday against Israel's ongoing genocide, in the eleventh national demonstration held in Britain's capital since last October.

The protest was part of demonstrations throughout Europe, with marches taking place in Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Milan, Oslo, Helsingborg, Aarhus and other cities. These were held to coincide with Land Day, which commemorates the bloody events of March 30, 1976, when six Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces as they rose up to protest Tel Aviv's expropriation and occupation of Palestinian lands.

The London attendance was all the more remarkable due to the march being held over the Easter weekend, with much of Britain's rail network work closed due to scheduled maintenance—adding hours to travel times. Thousands protested in other towns and cities.

In London, protesters assembled at Russell Square before marching down The Strand and ending up in Trafalgar Square where a rally was held.

The sustained opposition to Israel's genocide of the Palestinians, and the nervousness felt in ruling circles about its implications in broadening opposition found reflection in media reportage.

Britain's media notoriously downplays the size of any major protests that threaten the interests of the ruling elite. Yet on Saturday, both the *Guardian* and ITV News accurately reported in their headlines its size as being larger than 200,000. This was in contrast to last November, as mass outrage erupted at the extents of Israel's murderous invasion, when the *Guardian* managed to report a demonstration of 800,000—that brought London to a standstill—as attended by “around 300,000.” It has claimed that other huge national demonstrations over Gaza were attended by

“thousands.”

The *Guardian* also reported comments made from the platform, focusing on former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who it said “criticised the UK government for continuing the ‘grisly, ghastly arms trade with Israel’... He said: ‘What we’re watching on real time global television is the destruction of life, wanton destruction of life in Gaza. And our governments still can’t bring themselves to utter the words permanent ceasefire, still can’t bring themselves to stop the grisly, ghastly arms trade with Israel and the supply of weapons that goes from factories in France, in Germany, in this country and the USA, which are killing people in Gaza.’”

Also cited was the speech of Diane Abbott, who, like Corbyn, has been expelled from the parliamentary party by Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer. It reported that the “MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, accused British politicians of ‘paying lip service’ to a ceasefire.”

Sky News also felt the need to depart from its usual hostile reporting of the London demonstrations, with correspondent Tom Cheshire including comments in his dispatch from Ben Jamal, a representative of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign.

Cheshire wrote that since last November, “the context of the protests has changed... When hundreds of thousands marched in November, it wasn't the British government's position to call for a ceasefire. Now—arguably in part thanks to the protests—it is.”

Citing official backing for a recent bogus ceasefire resolution at the United Nations, Cheshire “asked [Jamal] whether protests like this—and the policing required to monitor them—were still necessary, when the British government wants the same thing, more or less?”

Jamal responded to clarify that “the government

position at the moment is to support a temporary pause and the government position at the moment is to continue selling arms to Israel.”

The changed tone in reporting, from citing government descriptions of protests as “antisemitic hate marches” to an apparent objectivity also saw the Metropolitan Police back off from its pledges to implement a clampdown. Just four people were arrested on Saturday, despite the statement of Deputy Assistant Commissioner Andy Valentine who said 48 hours ahead of the event that “swift and decisive action” would follow any activity deemed criminal by the police.

An opportunity for mass arrests was provided by a provocation staged by around 100 Zionists waving Israeli flags in a “counter-demonstration” as the main march neared its end at Aldwych.

The Zionist rally, protected by lines of police, didn’t achieve its aim of sparking violence which could be used by the government and police to justify a clampdown on the anti-war protests. Social media saw various Zionists berating the police for their failure to act.

As already indicated, the platform at this week’s event was dominated by figures from the Corbynite “left”—Corbyn himself, Abbott, Zarah Sultana, and Richard Burgon, chair of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs.

All continued to promote the fiction that Israel could be forced to stop its mass murder through appeals to MPs in Britain to demand a ceasefire. All that was required was more protests and pressure directed to the pro-war Labour Party.

To emphasize the servile character of such “opposition”, the banner reading “No Ceasefire, No Vote”—supporting protests in the upcoming general election against Labour which was made centre stage at all recent protests—was nowhere to be seen on Saturday.

Summing up the bankrupt perspective of the Stop the War Coalition, Chris Nineham, a leader of the pseudo-left Counterfire tendency, told the rally, “We are moving forwards, we’ve defied bans, we’ve got rid of a toxic home secretary [Suella Braverman], we’ve created a crisis in the Labour Party, and although last week’s UN resolution was way too little, too late, it is a sign that globally that Israel is being isolated”.

The opposite conclusions must be drawn. The United States, and the other imperialist powers continue to march in lockstep with Israel, with only tactical disagreements voiced over how to crush the Palestinians without fuelling even greater global opposition to their crimes.

Ending genocide in Gaza does not demand appeals to Starmer and his party of criminals allied to the Sunak government, the Biden administration and Netanyahu. It means building a mass international anti-war movement of the working class to thwart their murderous conspiracy by blockades, strikes and the political struggle for socialism.



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