

Snap British general election on July 4: Socialist Equality Party will challenge Tory and Labour parties of genocide and war

Socialist Equality Party (UK)

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British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has called a snap general election for July 4. Heading a hated Conservative government, 20 percentage points behind the opposition Labour Party in the polls, he calculates that waiting until later in the year would only make the Tory Party's position worse.

There is little chance of Sunak's desperate gamble paying off. His decision prompted letters of no confidence in his leadership from the party's right-wing. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer crowed this was the "moment the country needs and has been waiting for".

But notwithstanding the fate of the Tories, despised by millions, the problem facing workers in Britain is that there is nothing fundamental to distinguish Sunak's government from Starmer's Labour Party.

In making his announcement, Sunak repeated his earlier declaration that the essential question determining the elections outcome would be who could best be trusted to provide a "secure future for you, your family and your country". Under conditions of an expanding war across several fronts, Sunak stated:

"This election will take place at a time when the world is more dangerous than it has been since the end of the Cold War. Putin's Russia is waging a brutal war in Ukraine and will not stop there if he succeeds. That war has also made it all too clear the risk to our energy security.

"In the Middle East the forces of Islamist extremism threaten regional and ultimately global stability.

"These tensions are exploited by extremists who seek to undermine our values and seek to divide our values here at home. China is looking to dominate the 21st century by stealing a lead in technology and migration

is being weaponised by hostile states to threaten the integrity of our borders."

On this much at least, Sunak is correct: the fundamental issue facing the working class in this election is war and the offensive against social and democratic rights this demands, including the whipping up of xenophobia, centred on the Rwanda deportation scheme.

On May 13, in a speech trailing his election announcement, Sunak warned at greater length of "an axis of authoritarian states like Russia, Iran, North Korea and China," declaring that "war has returned to Europe and our NATO allies are warning that if Putin succeeds in Ukraine they might be next. War rages, too, in the Middle East as Israel defends itself not only against the terrorists of Hamas but a barrage of missiles fired—for the first time—directly from Iran."

Sunak went on to promise a clampdown on anti-Gaza genocide and anti-war protests, denouncing them as an abuse of "our liberal democratic values—the freedom of speech and right of protest—to intimidate, threaten and assault others, to sing antisemitic chants on our streets and our university campuses".

The prime minister here identifies the central target of the government's right-wing agenda: the developing mass movement of workers and youth against mass murder and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians and the global escalation of militarism and war.

But as the Socialist Equality Party has warned, there is no real difference between the Tories and Labour on support for genocide and war, or any other fundamental issue. Not only do Labour and the Tories represent a single party of war, but they are competing with each other over who is most pro-business, best able to

impose austerity, has the best policies to crack down on migration and can most successfully stifle opposition in the working class.

Starmer makes no bones about Labour's right-wing politics. His is the "party of NATO", of Zionism and which is "more pro-business than Tony Blair".

The Labour leader's main pitch to the ruling class is that, relying on the support of the trade union bureaucracy, he is best positioned to impose their dictates. He can cite as proof the role played by the union bureaucracy last year in sabotaging a strike wave that at one point encompassed two million workers.

It is a measure of the success of Starmer's message that broad sections of the ruling elite welcome a snap general election because they anticipate its hastening the bringing to power of Labour. The *Financial Times* editorial board headlined its response, "An end to Britain's uncertainty and drift".

Workers and young people are already broadly aware of this fact, hate Starmer—above all for his support for Israel's genocide in Gaza—and view the prospect of a Labour government as a continuation of Tory rule under a different name.

At this point, however, every political tendency advancing itself as a left and anti-war alternative offers nothing more than a protest vote against Starmer, under the slogan "no ceasefire, no vote."

The time for such a limited protest has long since passed. The working class in Britain, Europe and the world faces immense dangers.

The NATO-Russia war in Ukraine has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives already, yet all talk is of allowing Russian territory to be bombed with NATO weapons and even deploying NATO troops in large numbers directly to Ukraine. In the Middle East, support for Israel's offensive against the Palestinians is openly discussed as an antechamber for a broader offensive against Iran, all while provocations against China are mounted at every conceivable opportunity.

What is taking place is an attempt by the imperialist powers to redivide the world and its resources between them. To do so means a class war against workers must be waged at home.

The austerity measures imposed now for decade after decade are being ramped up as major think tanks declare the "end of the (post-Cold War) peace dividend."

Democratic rights, including the rights to free speech, assembly and protest—and the right to strike—are being eviscerated.

The Socialist Equality Party will stand candidates in this general election in a campaign dedicated to the development of a mass political movement of workers and young people against the genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine and the plans for war against Iran and China.

We reject any support for the Labour Party or any of its candidates. Those calling for support for candidates backing a ceasefire while staying loyal to the Labour Party are simply facilitating a political shift within capitalist rule. Labour is dead to the working class and must be replaced.

The SEP is the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution. This is the party that must now be built.

We advance a socialist perspective combining the struggle against austerity and the destruction of jobs, wages and essential social service with the fight against authoritarianism and war.

We do so in alliance with our sister parties internationally. Our election campaign is mirrored by the fight waged in Germany by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei in this summer's European elections, and in the United States where the Socialist Equality Party is fielding Joseph Kishore as its presidential candidate against "Genocide Joe" Biden and the would-be Führer Donald Trump.

The SEP appeals to all readers of the WSW to contact us today to help mount as effective a campaign as possible and build the new socialist leadership of the working class.



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