

Jeremy Corbyn to run as an independent in UK general election

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Former leader of the Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn has announced he will run as an independent candidate for his Islington North constituency in the British general election, standing against Labour candidate Praful Nargund. Running in opposition to Labour means Corbyn has been expelled from the party after 58 years of membership.

Corbyn did not jump from the right-wing, warmongering organisation but was pushed. A two-person shortlist was imposed by the party's leadership on the local Constituency Labour Party, which was denied the opportunity to nominate its own candidates, following a near unanimous motion demanding the right to do so. Corbyn held Islington North for Labour from 1983 to 2021.

Corbyn's response to his removal sums up his deep opposition to any political challenge to Labour as he continues his life's mission of subordinating the working class to this pro-imperialist party. Even after being witch-hunted and expelled, he still refuses to mount an offensive against Sir Keir Starmer's "party of NATO", Zionism and austerity, only a local campaign in support of his own, personal scruples.

Since surrendering the Labour leadership to Starmer, only to have the Labour whip removed over four years ago for refusing to apologise after politely suggesting that bogus claims of "left antisemitism" had been exaggerated by his enemies, various pseudo-left organisations have held out the prospect that Corbyn would step forward as the leader of a new left-of-Labour party. This was of particular significance as millions of workers and young people turned bitterly against Starmer's party due to its backing for Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza.

For month after month, Corbyn did the exact opposite—refusing on the platforms of the Stop the War Coalition to even criticise Starmer or Labour by name as he made vague appeals for all parties to support a

ceasefire.

Corbyn has now announced he is standing against Labour without once criticising his former party over its support for mass murder and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, for NATO's de facto war against Russia in Ukraine or pretty much anything else. He has carefully crafted his campaign so as not to clash with Labour, except within the boundaries of Islington North.

In a video posted to X and an article he chose to publish in the local *Islington Tribune* announcing his candidacy, the word Gaza does not pass Corbyn's lips, with the only oblique reference being a pledge of support for "global issues of peace and justice", uttered against a two-second backdrop of him speaking to a pro-Palestinian protest.

In lieu of any systematic critique of Labour, Corbyn complains that "Members of Islington North have been denied the right to choose their own candidate," concluding, "So we have to stand up. We have to stand up and say we're not taking this anymore. We will assert our rights."

This is the most animated Corbyn has ever been in the face of a sustained political witch-hunt, initiated the moment he was popularly elected as Labour leader in 2015, that saw hundreds of his own supporters, including some of his closest allies, slandered as "Jew haters" and driven out of the party.

Corbyn did nothing for the five years he headed the party other than to retreat before his Blairite opponents, whether this involved membership expulsions or key policy issues of political principle such as bombing Syria, NATO membership and renewing Britain's nuclear deterrent. Nothing would move Corbyn to wage a struggle against the party's right-wing as they colluded with the Tories and the security services to ensure Labour was fully restored as a nakedly pro-business party of austerity and war.

Today, with Starmer heading a party indistinguishable

from the Tories on any fundamental question, up to and including its praise for Margaret Thatcher, all Corbyn can muster is a personal appeal for a “fundamental redistribution of power and of wealth, public ownership of water, mail, energy companies,” rent controls, and “a health service that isn’t the plaything of global corporations”. “These fundamental demands,” Corbyn politely suggests, “are not being presented by the official opposition at the moment.”

As for Corbyn’s own plans if elected, he says that “Whoever the prime minister is,” he will “be holding them to account.” Decades of Corbyn’s performances on the backbenches make clear what this means in practice: routine unheard pleas and occasional scoldings delivered to a half-empty House of Commons.

Corbyn’s reference to holding whoever wins to account means he does not have to say what his attitude is to a Starmer government, or his relationship to it if he is elected. But the fact is that he will continue to back Labour from the opposition benches and to appeal to workers and young people not to give up hope in pushing a Starmer government to the left.

Making his political loyalties clear, he expresses his “hope” in his election statement “that those people that have always supported Labour, and indeed are members of the Labour Party, will understand that I am here to represent and serve the people of Islington North on the same principles I’ve always had as the MP for this area.”

Corbyn has made no call on any of his fellow members of the Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) of MPs who are still in the Labour Party to join him, and none of them have risked their own membership of the parliamentary party by lending their support.

Perhaps the most notable silence is from one of Corbyn’s closest allies, Diane Abbott, who has had the party whip withdrawn by Starmer after being accused of racism and will only find out whether she will be allowed to stand as Labour’s candidate for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, which she has represented for 37 years, on June 4, the day that candidate selection closes.

Meanwhile, John McDonnell, Corbyn’s former shadow chancellor, and all his fellow SCG members, are all getting on with the job of campaigning for a Labour victory. When it comes to opposing Starmer and his shadow cabinet of right-wing ideologues, a one-sided ceasefire has been called by all those who were supposed to be the leaders of Labour’s left-wing transformation.

And Corbyn makes clear that this will be maintained throughout the election. Acknowledging “this is going to

be a campaign with an awful lot thrown at us,” he promises to throw no punches back: “We will stick to the policies, to the issues.”

What is said of Corbyn holds true for the newly formed Collective organisation, headed by former African National Congress representative Andrew Feinstein. The *World Socialist Web Site* described Collective last month as “a collection of all the flotsam and jetsam of the Corbyn project, cast adrift after the abject failure of its stated goal of pushing the Labour Party to the left.”

We noted, “It says everything that the formal launching of Collective as a party is to be delayed until after the general election, most likely to accommodate Corbyn, the much-desired figurehead of the party, who wants to contest his Islington North seat as an Independent and not challenge a Starmer election victory.”

Although not acknowledged elsewhere, the *New Statesman* writes that “Corbyn is a member of a political grouping of candidates called the Collective,” alongside, “former Labour MP Claudia Webbe, Shamima Begum’s lawyer Tasnime Akunjee, and Andrew Feinstein”. The magazine adds, “In the long term, the Collective aims to become a political party.”

Corbyn’s political cowardice confirms that such a party, if it is eventually set up after the general election is over, would be a “left” talking shop, operating on the periphery of a Labour Party it has no perspective for ever replacing.

For years, every pseudo-left tendency in the UK proclaimed Corbyn as the man who would transform Labour. And they are still fawning at his feet, while following his lead in refusing to mobilise workers in opposition to Starmer’s party.

For its part, the Socialist Equality Party and its candidates will utilise the election campaign to prepare the most advanced workers and young people for building the new leadership the working class needs to take forward a political and class struggle against austerity, dictatorship, genocide and war.



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