

Leaders of London rally issue dead-end call for Sunak and Starmer to reverse support for Israel's genocide

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The first national march in London against the genocide in Gaza since Rishi Sunak called the July 4 general election was held Saturday. Around 175,000 attended the demonstration.

Demonstrations in London since Israel's war of annihilation of the Palestinians began in October have seen over 4 million people take to the streets. The latest mass protest, including many young people, show the enduring and widespread opposition to slaughter and its backing by the Conservative government and opposition Labour Party.

This determined stance by workers and young people is being corralled by the Stop the War Coalition and Palestine Solidarity Campaign into a dead-end, with calls that the only way to stop the genocide is to put pressure on the Tories and, above all, the Labour Party of genocide apologist in chief, Sir Keir Starmer.

The leaders of the demonstrations have sought to prevent any wider understanding of the war on the Palestinians by making no mention that the same powers backing Israel to the hilt are also backing Ukraine in the war against Russia. There has been no attempt to link the genocide in Gaza with the NATO-backed war on Russia in Ukraine, which has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian and Russians, soldiers and civilians over the last two years. Yet again on Saturday the words Ukraine, Russia and NATO did not pass the lips of platform speakers.

The rotten politics of the Stop the War Coalition were articulated by its convener Lindsey German, introduced to the demonstration as the "leader of Britain's anti-war movement."

Every effort had to be made to convince Rishi Sunak's Conservatives that it was never too late, even

in the midst of a month-long general election campaign, to rectify their policy, according to German. "We have a battle here in Britain to break our government from supporting Israel. We have a battle to stop them arming Israel. We have a battle to make them recognise majority opinion, because only 8 percent of people in this country agree with what Israel is doing.

"We are in the middle of an election period. In this election the slogan must be 'No ceasefire, no vote'. If Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer think they can support genocide and gets the votes of ordinary working people they are very much mistaken.

"I want to get rid of the Tories as much as anybody, but we are not going to give Labour a free pass... So we are fighting this election, we're supporting a whole number of [pro-ceasefire] candidates who have been marching today. We support Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, who was marching today."

Corbyn was expelled by Starmer from the parliamentary party more than four years ago, meaning he has been forced to stand as an Independent for the first time in his London seat since 1983. He has spoken regularly on the platforms of the national demonstrations in London for almost eight months—while carefully avoiding any mention of Starmer's name.

On Saturday, after being expelled from the Labour Party altogether for announcing he would defend his seat as an Independent, and free to denounce Starmer without any repercussions, Corbyn absented himself from the stage.

His five years as leader of the party saw a constant capitulation to the Blairite right, ending with the party being handed over to Starmer. His political loyalty to

the Labour and trade union bureaucracy ruled out any attack on Starmer and the Labour Party even as an Independent candidate. On this basis, he has centred his election campaign entirely on local issues in Islington North, giving no prominence to Gaza other than token references to fighting for “peace and justice.”

None of the very few Labour MPs who have spoken out against the genocide at previous London rallies, such as Zarah Sultana, Apsana Begum, or Bell Ribeiro-Addy, were on the platform. The leading figures in the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs—chair Richard Burgon and Corbyn’s former shadow chancellor John McDonnell, and former shadow home secretary Diane Abbott had already done a disappearing act—having not spoken at a national anti-genocide rally in months. All are busy campaigning for a Labour government that will continue to back Israel, NATO’s war against Russia and whatever else is demanded by the ruling elite.

Speaking on behalf of another of the co-organisers, Friends of Al-Aqsa, Ismail Patel said, “If we want to stop the genocide it is our moral and ethical duty to prioritise Palestine at the next general election. We must make sure that power is not handed over to the warmongers.” But all this meant in practice was to work to have “new MPs that support an end to genocide and a free Palestine,” so “Let us engage and work hard for the next Parliament, and be a voice of the people, before the businesses and the lobbyists take over and continue with the genocide.”

Concluding the rally, Ben Jamal said that the Palestine Solidarity Campaign was about to “launch a tool for every single one of you to send six clear demands to every parliamentary candidate. We will publish how they respond.”

The trade unions have done nothing to mobilise their membership of around 6 million workers in support of Gaza. Communication Workers Union Dave Ward took to the stage to politely suggest that the union leaders must try harder! “Today I want us to be part of building the Trade Union Bloc [consisting of a few dozen local union officials mainly from branches with a pseudo-left members in their leadership] that comes to these rallies. We commit to that. We will do more, we can do more, and the Trade Union Bloc is ready.”

The main point of Ward’s speech was to tell everyone that Keir “I’m a Zionist without

qualification” Starmer could be pressured, as a potential friend of the working class in government, to stop supporting Israel’s genocidal policy.

“We know that this government are not in favour of anything that we stand for, but there’s a Labour Party that’s going to be elected. And the Labour Party needs to come out and say... in this election that they believe in an independent free state in Palestine as part of a two-state solution.”

The CWU and Ward played a major role in keeping the hated Tory government in power, having sold out a national strike by postal workers that was part of a strike wave encompassing 2 million workers in 2022-23. The CWU is one of the 11 trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party, handing over substantial donations to Starmer and has just signed off on its pro-war general election manifesto for big business to be published this coming week.

The WSWS spoke to some of those attending Saturday’s protest.



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