

No to Gaza genocide and NATO war against Russia! Fight for a socialist alternative to Starmer's Labour Party! Build a socialist anti-war movement!

General Election manifesto

Socialist Equality Party (UK)

12 June 2024

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is standing candidates in the British general election to build a socialist anti-war movement, based on the working class.

Millions of workers and young people in the UK hate the Conservatives and Labour for their backing and arming of the Israeli state as it commits genocide, killing more than 38,000 Palestinians in Gaza, and they want an alternative.

What is not as well understood is that Britain, the United States, and other imperialist powers are taking actions in Ukraine that could result in a nuclear catastrophe threatening to destroy all life on earth. The global capitalist system, whose insoluble global crisis is the underlying cause of genocide and war, is descending into barbarism.

The SEP is using this election to break the conspiracy of silence maintained by the capitalist media, the major parties, the trade unions and what passes for the “left” over the acute dangers facing the working class. We intend to build a socialist alternative.

Mass opposition to Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza must become the spearhead of a political struggle against the broader war aims of the UK, the United States and the other NATO imperialist powers. Their support for Israel's mass murder and ethnic cleansing is bound up with plans for a new military carve-up of the world and its resources, centred on advanced preparations for war with Russia, Iran, and China.

Building a new anti-war movement demands an irrevocable break with the Labour Party.

Sir Keir Starmer wants to form a government that continues the Conservative Party's support for the Gaza genocide and the UK's leading role in the US-led war with Russia. Labour backs sending NATO troops to Ukraine and missile strikes on Russian soil with NATO-supplied weapons that could drag the UK, Europe and the world into war. It is committed to strengthening Britain's nuclear weapons programme, backed by Starmer's pledge that he will use them.

War on this scale demands an escalation of the savage austerity that has already left young people and working-class families struggling to survive. The ruling class is demanding an “end to the peace dividend”, which means a final death blow must be delivered to the National Health Service, social care, and all essential services to pay for war.

This is accompanied by a whipping up of nationalism and anti-immigrant xenophobia over the need for “strong borders” that is fuelling the rise of the far-right. A combined frontal assault on democratic rights has already begun with the campaign to criminalise protests over Gaza

using lying accusations of antisemitism.

That is why the SEP is standing its Assistant National Secretary Tom Scripps against Starmer in Holborn and St Pancras. A vote for Starmer and Labour is a vote for austerity, repression, genocide and war! A vote for Scripps and the SEP is a vote for equality, peace and socialism!

In Scotland, Darren Paxton is standing in Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire.

Britain's war election

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called the snap general election to create the political framework for a new stage in a European-wide war that demands a major confrontation with the working class and young people.

Mass demonstrations against the horrific crimes being carried out in Gaza by Netanyahu's far-right government, backed by Britain, the US, and other major powers, have mobilised millions. The ruling class fears an even larger eruption of opposition as the Israeli government expands its military campaign and as the full consequences of the NATO war with Russia become clear.

Sunak declared the main issue determining the election must be national security, citing the need to combat “an axis of authoritarian states like Russia, Iran, North Korea and China.” He claimed these global tensions were being “exploited by extremists who seek to undermine our values”, before denouncing anti-genocide protests as antisemitic.

These statements make clear that the task of the next government will be to drive forward the war plans of British imperialism over any resistance mounted by workers and students. This is confirmed by the announcement of a snap general election in France, where President Emmanuel Macron has responded to the rise of the far-right by seeking to create some form of national unity government to wage the war on Russia for which he has become the main advocate.

In the Middle East, as the death toll mounts in Gaza, Israeli aggression against Hezbollah in Lebanon is being ramped up and missile and drone strikes have been exchanged between Israel and Iran.

In Ukraine, agreeing to Kiev striking Russian territory with NATO-supplied long-range missiles accompanies plans to send soldiers from NATO countries to fight on the frontline and imposing conscription to

supply fresh cannon fodder. NATO has established military corridors in Europe to allow for the rapid deployment to the east of hundreds of thousands of troops.

There is nothing remotely progressive about the “Special Military Operation” launched by President Vladimir Putin in the interests of the Russian capitalist oligarchs who rose to power on the basis of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the privatisation and plundering of the state assets nationalised in the aftermath of the 1917 October Revolution. Based on its bankrupt “Great Russian” nationalist perspective, the Putin government is driven to ever more reckless and provocative military escalations of its own, including threats to use nuclear weapons.

But opposition to Russia’s invasion must not translate into support for NATO imperialism, which deliberately created the conditions for the Kremlin’s reactionary response—through the constant eastward expansion of the military alliance towards Russia since 1990 and then the seizing of political control of Ukraine through the pro-western coup engineered in 2014.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, portrayed as a champion of democracy, is as much a right-wing stooge of the imperialist powers as Netanyahu. He heads a regime of virulent nationalists and outright fascists, which ruthlessly suppresses strikes, free speech and political opposition to the war as it rounds up its citizens and sends them to die.

Amid mounting opposition to the war and resistance to the draft, the Zelensky government has arrested our comrade, the Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, on fraudulent charges of serving the interests of Russia. Bogdan is an intransigent opponent of the capitalist Putin regime and its invasion of Ukraine, fighting for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers and youth against war.

His fate mirrors that of Julian Assange, detained and imprisoned for 14 years by the UK and facing extradition to the US and a possible 175-year sentence for exposing war crimes.

By waging war against Russia, and ultimately Iran and China, NATO hopes to collapse their governments and implement regime change that gives them direct control of essential natural resources. This reckless escalation risks nuclear war, but the imperialist powers are willing to take this risk because they see no other way out of the desperate situation they face—drained of all legitimacy and ruling over impoverished and restive populations.

The ruling elites in the UK and internationally calculate that war abroad will create conditions for the suppression of democratic rights in the name of war-time “national unity”. This includes plans to ban strikes and protests that reflect fear of a broader movement in the working class, which will be forced to pay for the war with their lives and the destruction of social programmes.

Starmer’s Labour Party of genocide and war

Starmer and other Labour leaders are hated for backing mass murder and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, based on their sickening invocation of Israel’s “right to self-defence.” But Starmer’s “party of Zionism” is also the “party of NATO.” And what is being concealed from the public gaze is the active and advanced preparation for a Labour government to drag Britain into a war that would see the atrocities of Gaza multiplied a thousand-fold.

Starmer responded to Sunak’s snap general election statement with his own call to place Britain on a war-footing. “The post-war era is over,” he declared. “This Labour Party is totally committed to the security of our nation. To our armed forces. And, importantly, to our nuclear deterrent.”

He boasted that Labour will build four new nuclear submarines and promised “world leaders from the US, Europe and the Middle East” his government would “always meet our international obligations”.

This is why Washington and other imperialist capitals, the British Armed Forces and the City of London stand behind a Labour government. Starmer’s first act as prime minister would be to attend a NATO summit in Washington D.C. on July 9 to discuss waging war against Russia.

The Socialist Equality Party rejects the lie that a vote for Labour is for a “lesser evil” than the Tories. They represent a single party of war, with Labour boasting of having a better policy to crack down on migration and promising to form “the most business friendly government” in history.

Starmer’s pitch to the ruling class is that he can rely on his allies in the trade union bureaucracy to police and betray the working class and impose the dictates of the major corporations and banks. He can cite as proof the role played by the union bureaucracy in sabotaging the 2022-23 strike wave that at one point encompassed two million workers.

The SEP rejects calls to sink political differences to bring about one big Gaza protest vote. The promise by the Stop the War Coalition and various pseudo-left groups of “No Ceasefire, No Vote” means supporting some protest candidates while calling for a vote for Labour everywhere else. It ends with the formation of a government that will continue backing Israel and waging NATO’s wars. The Labour “lefts” such as John McDonnell and Diane Abbott are all dutifully campaigning for such a government.

Jeremy Corbyn is standing as an independent in Islington North, but only because he was booted out of the Labour Party. Even now he makes no direct criticism of its support for mass murder and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, NATO’s war against Russia in Ukraine or anything else. He has carefully crafted his campaign so as not to clash with Labour except within the boundaries of Islington North, and has made no call for anyone else to leave the party and build a new one.

The only reason Starmer is poised to enter 10 Downing Street is that Corbyn and his backers, elected by a landslide to lead the Labour Party in 2015, faced down demands from workers and youth to drive out the Blairites. Corbyn capitulated on all fundamental issues, including NATO membership and nuclear weapons, and then politely handed the party over to Starmer. The refusal to fight the lie of “left antisemitism” laid the basis for mass expulsions and now the grotesque depiction of Gaza protests, also attended by hundreds of Jews, as “hate marches.”

George Galloway’s Workers Party of Britain offers no alternative. Advanced as a return to “traditional Labour values”, its nationalist and pro-capitalist programme includes a clampdown on migration targeting refugees, and has become a political home to Asian businessmen, opportunist officials of the Labour, Tory, Liberal Democrats, and worse.

In Scotland, the ruling Scottish National Party (SNP) calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, but unconditionally supports NATO and the war against Russia in Ukraine. Outside of their divisive proposal for an independent capitalist Scotland, the SNP is virtually indistinguishable from Starmer’s Labour Party of war.

Build the Socialist Equality Party

The Socialist Equality Party states plainly to workers, especially the young generation: The building of a new and genuinely socialist leadership must begin now. We advance the socialist and internationalist programme on which this new leadership must be built.

The SEP is the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world party of socialist revolution, founded by Leon Trotsky in a fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy and its crimes.

The danger of a new world war arises out of the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system—between the development of a global economy and its division into antagonistic nation states, in which the private ownership of the means of production is rooted. This is what drives the US, Britain and other imperialist powers as they seek unchallenged domination of the world.

The international working class is the only social force that can stop this global eruption of war. In its June 2 statement, “Stop the US-NATO escalation toward nuclear war! Unite the international working class against imperialist war and genocide!” the ICFI explains:

The same contradictions driving imperialism to the brink of nuclear war provide the objective basis for social revolution. The international working class is a massive social force, whose interests collide with capitalist exploitation and imperialist barbarism... There is only one way that the spiral toward disaster can be avoided, and that is through the intervention of the working class to force an end to this war.

The SEP fights for the formation of a mass movement against genocide and war based on these four essential principles:

1. A movement against genocide and war must be based in the working class. It is the working class that will fight and die in war, and it is the working class that will be forced to pay for it. The same capitalist crisis that produces war also produces the basis for ending war, in the form of growing struggles against inequality, poverty and the attack on wages, jobs, healthcare, education and all the social rights of the working class.

2. It must be completely independent of and hostile to all political parties and organisations of the capitalist class, the Labour Party above all.

3. It must be international, uniting workers in every country and on every continent on the basis of their common class interests. The escalating global war, like World War I and World War II, arises out of the contradictions of the world capitalist system. A new global conflagration can only be averted through the mobilisation of the world working class, which produces all of society’s wealth and therefore has the social and economic power to oppose the conspiracies of the capitalist ruling elites.

4. It must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of war.

To mobilise the immense social power of the working class against the capitalist class and its representatives means overcoming the gap between the advanced stage of the global crisis and the present level of mass political consciousness. This is only possible through the building of a Marxist-Trotskyist leadership and the revolutionary renewal of the international workers’ movement based on socialist policies.

The SEP is dedicated to this historic task. We fight alongside our sister parties for the unity of workers in Russia, Ukraine, and all of the former Soviet Union with their brothers and sisters in Europe, Asia, and America against war and for socialism. We appeal to all workers and youth to join the SEP and take their place in this struggle.

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