

SEP (UK) candidate Tom Scripps speaks at Palestine Solidarity Campaign hustings

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidate for Holborn and St Pancras, Tom Scripps, spoke on Monday at hustings organised by the Camden branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Independent candidate Andrew Feinstein, and representatives for the Green Party and the UK Independence Party also attended.

Scripps insisted, “You cannot fight any of these wars and cities with moral appeals, protest candidacies, pressure groups on parliament, or the institutions of the United Nations,” and provocatively, the UK Independence Party also attended.

Candidates were given four minutes to make an opening statement, before giving two-minute answers to a series of questions from the floor.

Scripps explained that he would be presenting the party’s programme, not simply for Holborn and St Pancras, not simply for the election, but for the international working class and oppressed peoples of the world in a period of history characterised by the descent into war, genocide, poverty and dictatorship.”

He said that the only way to achieve “recognition and the restoration of the state of Palestine,” Scripps argued, “this internationally anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist politics.” Israel is not supported simply “because the Israeli state has a strong lobby,” but because “the imperialist powers have their own interests, in the region... a geostrategically critical region of the world.”

Citing from the first statement issued by the *World Socialist Web Site*’s international editorial board on Israel’s war on Gaza, Scripps said, “the reactionary perspective of securing an exclusivist Jewish state through the forcible expulsion of the Palestinians can only be maintained by mass murder and ethnic cleansing.”

The SEP places the genocide in Gaza in its world context. The imperialist powers backed the crimes carried out by Israel in response to what they consider ‘the Palestinian problem’ because “the Palestinians are a historic symbol for all the people of the Middle East, and beyond, of resistance to imperialism and oppression. And because the United States is determined to secure its undisputed hegemony over the region.”

“Uniquely,” Scripps continued, the SEP had “fought for an understanding of this genocide and threatened regional war as part of a new imperialist carve-up of the world. Running parallel to the war in Gaza is the war in Ukraine, where hundreds of thousands of lives have likely been lost, and which is moving inexorably towards direct confrontation between the NATO and Russian militaries.”

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Scripps answered, to applause, “How do we defend the NHS? This was “graphically demonstrated” by Corbyn who “never among other things by as quickly as possible politically dissolved an opportunity to insist that we should all just get along demolishing the Labour Party, which is at the moment the biggest threat to it.” Billions are made available for war not public services “not as a mistake and not out of some idea of grandeur but because the ruling class in this country is speaking seriously about the ‘end of the peace dividend’, because they are contemplating war on a scale that is horrific.”

Asked about his position on the Ukraine war, Scripps responded, “The Ukrainian war backed by the United States and Britain and the NATO powers is as much a war for democracy and sovereignty as Israel’s war is to rescue the hostages and defend itself.”

“The NATO powers are making use of the brutal and criminal invasion of Ukraine by the Putin government—which knowingly provoked with the encroachment of NATO eastwards and the orchestration of a coup in 2014 to install a blatantly anti-Russian government—as a pretext for funding a proxy war and approaching a direct war.”

They are using Ukrainians “as cannon fodder for a strategy of wearing down, putting pressure on the Putin government in an attempt to collapse it, to install—as they have done in so many other places across the world, where there is territory that they want—a puppet regime more amenable to their interests.”

The way to stop the war was “to fight, as we have done for our comrades in Russia and in Ukraine, for a joint anti-imperialist movement that rejects Putin, that rejects Zelensky, that rejects the NATO powers.” Scripps raised the imprisonment of our comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk by the Zelensky regime and appealed to those present to support the campaign for his freedom.

Feinstein, whose election manifesto does not mention Ukraine or NATO, made clear this was a politically opportunist decision. He accepted the Ukraine war “has been provoked by the actions of NATO” and that the Ukrainian regime was “incredibly corrupt” with a “hard core of neo-Nazis”. He then stressed his biasing himself on “in some ways quite problematic international law”, that “the Russian invasion of Ukraine was undoubtedly illegal and should therefore be condemned” but that the West’s actions over Gaza meant the condemnation of Russia was “seen as hypocritical and meaningless.”

Stopping the war meant “addressing the reality of nature of NATO, of militarism, and the global national security elite, who profit from war.”

Asked about media bias, Scripps replied, “You will always face the opposition of the corporate controlled media. If you are trying to do something correct, you will face their opposition. That has to be your first principle of politics. You cannot win over your sworn opponents.”

Today “class tensions are far more advanced. The ruling class knows it and they’re preparing for it. That’s why there are anti-strike and anti-protest laws on an appalling scale because they know there will be a mass movement of people and they’re preparing to deal with it.”

The working class also has to prepare by forming their own party, based on the “perspective of socialism, a perspective that has been fought for and worked out over the entirety of the 20th century and through into the 21st century.”

Asked how he could separate the problems he had identified throughout the evening, including “corruption”, from capitalism and the profit system, and why he always made a point of defending the profit system, Feinstein responded that fundamental changes are required throughout the political and economic system, but I’m going to be completely honest with you, I do not know what the solution is... I wish I could say there is an economic system that has worked, and that it’s obvious that it would work but I don’t think that is the case ... If we throw out the entire model now, I want to see exactly what the model that replaces it is.”

Answers would be found “as a community” and would include elements of what we would understand economically as socialism in that. But there’s a lot of people have a lot of very different views as to what socialism is.”

Challenged over whether the SEP was a “realistic option in imposing Keir Starmer,” Scripps replied “Yes because we are the only party that has waged a consistent campaign against the Labour Party and all of its factions, including the Labour left, which has for so long played the role of rounding up those who are disaffected with and alienated with this right-wing, mongering party and claiming that it could somehow become the vehicle for something different.

We have always opposed that, we will always oppose that, and that is the only programme on which this political monster that is Keir Starmer, but is the entire Labour Party, can be defeated.”



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