

# 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 a hustings organised by the Camden branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Independent candidate Andrew Feinstein, and representatives for the Green Party 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 “my 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.”

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 as a “solution to what they consider ‘the Palestinian problem’,” because “the Palestinians are a historic symbol for all the peoples of the Middle East, and beyond, of resistance to imperialist 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.”

This would “deepen the economics of austerity and the politics of authoritarianism.”

Scripps insisted, “You cannot fight any of these wars and

atrocities with moral appeals, protest candidacies, pressure groups on parliament, or the institutions of the United Nations,” a politics he said was “summed up in the figure of Jeremy Corbyn... whose five-year leadership of the Labour Party we say is a warning of what happens when a left-wing movement of workers and young people is subordinated to appeasing the right-wing, reasoning with the ruling class and working within capitalism.”

In response to a question about how to achieve “recognition and restoration of the state of Palestine,” Scripps argued, “this can only be addressed in an international context and with a fundamentally 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.”

Ending the genocide and oppression of the Palestinians meant mobilizing “a force of sufficient scale and sufficient power to defeat not just Israel, and certainly not to persuade it, but to defeat world imperialism.”

This required the revival of the “Marxist tradition as the basis for a rebuilding of the socialist movement and a unified movement in the Middle East of Arab and Israeli, Jewish and Muslim workers for a socialist Palestine guaranteeing full democratic and religious rights to all.”

In response to a question on how to defend the National Health Service from privatisation, Andrew Feinstein answered that he thought “certain areas of human activity should not be undertaken for profit and healthcare is perhaps the most obvious,” before adding, “I don’t have a problem with the existence of the private sector.”

Money could be taken from the defence budget, he said, attributing this and the existence of Britain’s nuclear weapons programme to “the extent of corruption within the global arms trade, that feeds back into our politics.”

Scripps answered, to applause, “How do we defend the NHS? Among other things by as quickly as possible politically 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 very seriously about the ‘end of the peace dividend’, because it is 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, 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 they knowingly provoked with the encroachment of NATO ever eastwards and the orchestration of a coup in 2014 to install a rabidly anti-Russian government—as a pretext for funding a proxy 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 are resources, 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 with our comrades in Russia and in Ukraine, for a joint anti-war movement that rejects Putin, that rejects Zelensky, that rejects the NATO powers.” Scripps raised the imprisonment of our comrade Bogdan Syrotyuk 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, basing 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.”

This was “graphically demonstrated” by Corbyn who “never missed an opportunity to insist that we should all just

get along and that we can solve things through reasoned debate.” Meanwhile, leading figures in the Labour party were “alleging he was an antisemite and seeking to prevent his election. Sections of the military were openly planning for a mutiny, using his face for target practice.”

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 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 deposing 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 were disaffected with and alienated with this right-wing, warmongering party and claiming that it could somehow become a 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 not just Starmer, but is the entire Labour Party, can be defeated.”



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