

# 100,000 march in London against Gaza genocide as organisers insist fate of Palestinians depends on pressurising Starmer's Labour government

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Around 100,000 demonstrated in London on Saturday in the 15th national march against the Israel's nine-month long genocidal onslaught on Gaza.

The rally, organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop the War Coalition, and other groups, was held two days after the election of Sir Keir Starmer's Labour government, ending 14 years of Conservatives rule.

Assembling in Russell Square, the march finished with a rally adjacent to Portcullis House, across the street from Parliament. Police denied access to Whitehall—the road containing the prime minister's residence 10 Downing Street, where Starmer was holding his first Cabinet meeting as the rally took place.

Predictably, the line of the rally organisers was to insist that the focus of all efforts to stop the genocide was to pressure the new resident of Downing Street into abandoning Labour's backing for Israel. The rally was called under the slogan: "Tell the new government... End The Genocide-Stop Arming Israel." This flowed inexorably from their pre-election demand "No Ceasefire, No Vote!" giving de facto critical support for the election of a Labour government while backing Gaza protest candidates challenging Labour in some constituencies.

As the rally was taking place, Stop the War issued a petition on their X account, at 2:32 p.m., under the heading: "Starmer's Labour: No More War!"

Addressed to the "Incoming Labour Government", the petition consists of three short paragraphs beginning by acknowledging: "Keir Starmer's Labour promises to be a government of more war and militarism" and that Labour "has backed every Tory foreign policy position possible: the enabling of genocide in Gaza, fuelling the NATO proxy war in Ukraine and unlawful bombing raids on Yemen. Labour has also committed to a 2.5% increase in defence spending, an 'unshakeable commitment to NATO' and nuclear weapon".

Despite this, Stop the War repeats its long established appeal for the British ruling class to pursue a foreign policy not aligned to US imperialism and more pacifist in character. It

concludes, "We need a foreign and defence policy based on peace and diplomacy, not war and destruction. We demand that the British government breaks with US war policy and that it develops an independent, peaceful approach to international affairs."

To claim success for its strategy, the rally featured former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn who, having been kicked out of the parliamentary party in 2020 on bogus allegations of antisemitism, was elected as an independent in Islington North after thrashing his Labour opponent. Alongside Corbyn, candidates who took Labour seats on an anti-Gazan war ticket were Iqbal Mohamed for Dewsbury and Batley; Adnan Hussain who beat Labour in Blackburn; Shockat Adam who won in Leicester South; and Ayoub Khan in Birmingham Perry Barr.

Of these newly elected MP's only Iqbal Mohamed was present. But the platform included Leanne Mohamed, who came within 500 votes of beating Health Secretary Wes Streeting; and Andrew Feinstein—who won almost 19 percent of the vote (7,312 votes) in Starmer's Holborn and St Pancras constituency—in a ballot that saw the new prime minister's vote halved to just over 18,000.

They were joined by a single Labour MP, Apsana Begum, representing the rump of what passes for a "left" within the Starmer government; and who has never offered a word of criticism of Starmer at national rallies.

Corbyn was introduced as "the independent MP for the People's Republic of Islington North and our prime minister". Even after being expelled and elected an independent, Corbyn spent his speech telling everyone that the main issue was to continue putting pressure on Starmer and other MPs.

"I will be joined [in Parliament] by four great comrades who were also elected as independent MPs on Thursday, and I'm proud to be here on the platform with good friends like Leanne, and Andrew and Micheal [Lavalette, who received nearly 22 percent as an independent candidate in Preston] and so many others who have done so much to campaign consistently for

Palestine.”

He continued, “In that Parliament we have a great opportunity of giving a message to the new government. But I hope in that Cabinet meeting ... they will just sit back for a moment, look through those windows on Downing Street’s garden... and think for a moment. They have a responsibility and an opportunity. They have a responsibility to act in proper and decent manner.”

He declared that “It was up to the new government what it does,” but, as if the Labour warmongers didn’t know, “I just remind them of this, that 40,000 people have already been killed in Gaza... many of those were children.”

Supporting Israel’s destruction of Gaza was “a moral question” and “the morality has to be challenged.”

To Starmer’s Labour, which has never wavered an inch in backing Israel’s onslaught and NATO’s war on Russian in Ukraine, Corbyn pleaded, “So this is the message we’re giving today. To the new government, listen to the results on Thursday. Listen to the voices of ordinary people.”

Feinstein stated, “Starmer is the first British prime minister in electoral history to enter 10 Downing Street having seen his majority reduced”. As usual the former African National Congress MP cited his “former boss” Nelson Mandela as being an ardent backer of the Palestinians, before offering the prospect of waiting another five years until the next scheduled General Election in 2029 to deal Starmer’s Labour a more decisive blow. “We are going to organise in Holborn and St Pancras and in every constituency in the United Kingdom. Not just so that at the next elections we get neither a red or a blue Tory government, but we get a true government of the people that stands with the people of Palestine,” he said.

Despite the mobilisation of collectively well over 4 million people on the streets of London and in cities throughout the UK, the organisers have never once linked the struggle of the fight against Israel’s genocide with opposition to the war in Ukraine—being organised and funded by the same NATO imperialist powers that back Netanyahu. Yet again on Saturday, no-one mentioned the words Ukraine or Russia or the brutal war raging just 1,500 miles from London.

It was only the campaign of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and its general election candidates Tom Scripps in Starmer’s constituency and Darren Paxton in Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire that advanced a perspective for the independent mobilisation of the working class against genocide and war.

At the demonstration, the SEP circulated as a leaflet the WSWs Perspective column, “Build the socialist opposition to Starmer’s right-wing government!”

This explains that Starmer “owes his ‘landslide’ victory entirely to the hatred with which the Conservative government of the last 14 years was viewed, the thoroughly undemocratic first-past-the-post system, and the fact that widespread left-wing sentiment has found no organised socialist expression.”

And it indicts Corbyn and his pseudo-left backers for the absence of such an organised alternative, leaving only a vote for independents, and to some extent the Green Party, as a means of expressing opposition to Labour.

Corbyn had a massive popular mandate “to destroy the Tory Party mark two run by the Blairites,” but dedicated himself instead to protecting them and capitulating on every fundamental question, including NATO and nuclear weapons.

“Had Corbyn taken up a fight against his sworn opponents, the whole constellation of British politics would have been transformed”, the perspective states. Instead, even now Corbyn declares that he will back Labour in parliament on the “good stuff” it does. “He maintains a personal following for this position by relying on the pragmatism of electoral politics and cynicism towards the possibility of overthrowing capitalism. Such debilitating conceptions must be broken with. They play far more of a role in keeping the Starmers of the world in power than any of their own non-existent strengths.”

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WSWS reporters spoke to some of those who attended Saturday’s demonstration in Manchester to protest the Gaza genocide.

Unite Community (retirees) union member Ben said of the election of a Labour government led by Starmer, “The UK is a vassal state to America and now to the Israeli Zionist government. They’re ruling the Labour Party. What Starmer said about pretending to do a U-turn on Gaza [after saying Israel had the right to withdraw power and water] is appalling—is he going to stop supplying the Zionists with weapons?”

“I’ve been a member of the Labour Party all my life. But I told my kids, there’s no one to vote for. Even the Greens want to pump more arms into the NATO war in Ukraine. Under Labour there’s no ‘magic money tree’ unless you want bombs and nuclear weapons.

“I’ve been told not to resign from the Labour Party, that we must stay in and return it back to what it should be, a socialist party for the working class, not a capitalist party for the rich bankers and corporations. But I think the prospects for doing this are very poor. Parliamentary democracy is just about dead. If there was proper democracy, Labour shouldn’t be in office, they lost the popular vote.

“As for [Unite general secretary] Sharon Graham, she does everything that Starmer wants against the views of the members. Starmer has broken every promise, and people will realise what a liar he is—the youth that can’t get a house, that can’t get a job.”



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