

Opposing Gaza genocide demands a socialist political struggle against Starmer Labour government

Chris Marsden**23 May 2025**

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and his foreign secretary David Lammy responded to Israel's military offensive to complete the ethnic cleansing of Gaza with weasel words condemning a "disproportionate response" and breaking off trade talks.

This is a filthy attempt to give the Labour government an alibi for nineteen months of collusion with genocide, made even as military supplies from Britain are being offloaded in Israel and the Royal Air Force continues reconnaissance flights over Gaza to help plan mass murder.

It will do nothing to stop Operation Gideon's Chariots, described by far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Yoel Smotrich as a "conquer, cleanse and stay" operation that will drive the Palestinians "to third countries under President Trump's plan." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu then declared that his "war" would only end when "Gaza is totally disarmed, and we carry out the Trump plan. A plan that is so correct and so revolutionary."

The millions of workers and young people who have mobilised in defence of the Palestinians must now recognise that protest marches are not enough. No appeal to the Labour government or moral pressure placed on it and other world governments will stop the genocide.

The working class can no longer tolerate the political rule of Starmer's government, paid for with donations from the trade unions who have stood by as tens of thousands, mostly women and children, are murdered. There must be a turn to a political and class struggle against Starmer's war criminals: a mass anti-genocide and anti-war movement, as the spearhead of a struggle to build a new and genuinely socialist party.

Labour a far-right party in everything but name

Shorn of its name, conjuring images of a long-abandoned connections to reformism, the Labour government is a far-right formation. Starmer heads a Thatcherite pro-business party of austerity. He is leading an attack on democratic rights centred on the criminalisation of Gaza protests using the lie of "antisemitism". His government spews anti-migrant xenophobia and pursues a policy of escalating militarism, focussed on efforts to continue the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

This month Starmer launched a frontal attack on migrants in the language of infamous Tory racist Enoch Powell, speaking of Britain "becoming an island of strangers", just as Powell fulminated against white Britons "made strangers in their own country."

Starmer has adopted wholesale the agenda of Nigel Farage's Reform UK, criminalising and seeking to jail, deport, and tag as many migrants as

possible. A jubilant Farage declared that Labour had "learned a very great deal" from his party, before calling on Starmer to declare a state of national emergency at Britain's borders.

Labour is the real threat to workers' jobs, wages and essential services, not migrants. It is slashing hundreds of thousands of jobs in the civil service, the National Health Service and in services run by bankrupted councils, imposing a Trump/Musk DOGE-style slash-and-burn agenda. It has already imposed £6 billion in benefit cuts and more will follow.

A government of austerity and war

The constant declarations that cuts are unavoidable because there is no money to spend conceal Labour's two strategic imperatives:

Firstly, nothing can be allowed to interfere with the banks, corporations and the super-rich glutting themselves at workers' expense—under conditions where the number of UK billionaires has grown from 15 in 1990 to 165 in 2024, their average wealth has leapt by more than 1,000 percent and the top 50 richest UK families hold more wealth than the poorest half of the population combined, more than 34 million people.

Secondly, Britain's economy and the whole of society must be put on a war footing. The post-Second World War "peace dividend" allowing for social welfare policies is over, with the eruption of trade and military war to redive the world between the rival imperialist powers.

Even before Starmer came to power he was widely despised for backing the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza. But Labour also governs as the "party of NATO", seeking to keep the proxy war against Russia going by a European "coalition of the willing" in the face of negotiations between the Putin regime in Moscow and the White House. These war aims are the gravest threat to the working class, threatening a descent into barbarism of which Gaza is a warning.

Making Britain war ready demands savage austerity and is prepared ideologically through the whipping up of nationalism and anti-immigrant xenophobia. It necessitates a shift to authoritarian forms of rule and the cultivation of far-right forces to crush resistance in the working class.

This finds its most advanced form in the United States, in the coming to power of Donald Trump and his moves to establish a presidential dictatorship. But it is an international phenomenon that has seen the coming to power of far-right parties, or their emergence as the main official opposition across Europe. Of equal significance is the adoption of the programme of the far-right by all Europe's governments, whatever their formal colouration. Starmer's Labour government is the form which the lurch to austerity, repression and war takes place in the UK.

Stop the War sows illusions in protest politics

There is already a recognition, especially among the younger generation of workers and students, that it is not enough to protest the Starmer government.

Yet, responding to the mealy-mouthed pronouncements of Starmer and Lammy, the Stop the War Coalition boasts, “The Gaza solidarity movement has outlived the British Government’s policy of defence for Israel’s assault on Gaza,” delivering “another partial but real victory”, even as Netanyahu proceeds to implement his “final solution” against the Palestinians.

Stop the War acknowledges that “Gaza is in the grip of starvation,” but insists that the main issue is to “have no more patience with” the criticism of its exclusive focus on protest marches “which persists in pockets of the activist left, rather than in the wider movement or public opinion” and “is inexcusable in face of the evidence.”

For Stop the War’s leadership, centrally Counterfire and the Stalinist Communist Party of Britain, the “evidence” of Labour’s cynical statements is far more important than the rising death toll in Gaza because they must preserve their alliance with Corbyn, the rump of the Labour “left” and the trade union bureaucracy at all costs. Therefore, they insist that “it’s time to graduate from a comforting fantasy about wonder-tactics that will somehow deliver a total and final victory”, i.e., an end to genocide, as they stage their latest lobby of parliament.

Corbynites try to stymie working-class opposition to Starmer

Last year’s general election saw many candidates stand against Labour, amid widespread discussion on the need to set up a new left party.

But the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition and Britain’s pseudo-left tendencies such as the Socialist Workers Party combined an endorsement of a limited number of independent candidates standing against Labour solely on the issue of Gaza, while calling for a Labour vote against the Tories everywhere else.

Many hoped that expelled former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn would lead the fight for a new party, but he refused and was elected along with five others as independent MPs. He continues to refuse all entreaties to form a new party, insisting that the time is not yet ripe.

Instead, he and his backers insist that Labour can be made to change course by popular pressure, leaving Reform UK free to channel mounting social distress and political hostility to Starmer behind their scapegoating of migrants and promises of patriotic national renewal.

The primary political concern of the “left” is to preserve the stranglehold of the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy over the working class.

Indeed, Starmer was only handed the leadership of the Labour Party because Corbyn and the Labour “left”—while they were being promoted by the pseudo-left groups as transforming Labour into a genuine workers’ party—refused to drive out the right-wing, capitulated to its every political demand and instead allowed their own supporters to be witch-hunted as antisemites. This is a political crime for which workers are still being made to pay.

For the same reason, Corbyn rejects all appeals to head a new party. As the Socialist Equality Party warned:

“Nothing—not support for genocide, nor military rearmament at the cost of the most devastating offensive against the welfare state ever undertaken—will move them to mobilise a political movement independently of and directed against the Labour government. Theirs is the policy of acquiescence, not resistance, and their real hope is that no movement develops in the working class that challenges their routine protests.”

A recipe for a less-than-Labour Mark II

Even if events force Corbyn and the pseudo-left to finally stand against Labour, any party they form would offer no real alternative. Corbyn’s proposal for a movement against Labour is that it must be based on the five demands of his Peace and Justice Project: A pay rise for the many; A Green New Deal; Housing for all; Tax the rich to save the NHS; Welcome refugees and a world free from war. Ending the Gaza genocide doesn’t even get a specific mention in this wish list.

These proposals do not even rise to the level of a call for a Labour Party Mark II. To combat the rise of communism following the October 1917 Russian Revolution, the Fabian leaders Sydney and Beatrice Webb in November that year drafted Clause Four of Labour’s constitution, adopted in 1918, committing Labour to “the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange”, to be achieved by reformist means in parliament. Corbyn, in contrast, doesn’t even mention the word socialism.

This does not stop his pseudo-left cheerleaders from insisting that all that can be done is to push Corbyn and some trade union bureaucrats to adopt a more forthright reformist programme, insisting that nothing be done to alienate these “natural leaders” of a new working-class party.

Any such “broad left” party would be nothing more than a ginger group, protesting Labour’s savage cuts, urging the occasional strike, and making pacifist appeals for the government to end support for the Gaza genocide and curb its incessant warmongering.

National reformism is bankrupt, turn to socialist internationalism!

Labour’s degeneration is not the product of the betrayals of Starmer and his cohorts. Like the failure of Corbynism to provide a viable opposition to the rightward evolution of the Labour Party, it is the product of the bankruptcy of the national reformist programme they both once upheld.

The development of transnational production and the global integration of finance and manufacturing, coupled with a deep crisis of the profit system and spiralling debts, is spurring the world’s major powers into a global struggle to redivide the world’s markets and essential resources between them.

This demands a domestic war against the working class to make economies internationally competitive and to secure the vast sums necessary for rearmament and military conflict—ending any possibility of social reform and instigating instead a social counter-revolution.

But the contradictions underlying this eruption of militarism and social reaction—between a global economy and its division into antagonistic nation states and competing private enterprises rooted in this national soil—are also bringing millions of workers into struggle against austerity, right-wing reaction and imperialist military barbarism.

These workers are part of an international class, objectively unified by a global system of production and producing all of society’s wealth. They

face a common enemy in the giant transnational corporations and banks that dictate the policy of every national government. Everything depends on arming their struggles with a socialist and internationalist perspective and leadership that meets up to these challenges.

The Socialist Equality Party fights for the formation of a mass international movement against genocide and war based on the working class, intertwined with the struggle against inequality, poverty and attacks on wages, jobs, healthcare, education and all the social rights of the working class.

This movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war and social counter-revolution except in the fight to end the domination of society by a financial and corporate oligarchy and its monopolies.

The new party the working-class needs is the SEP, British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world party of socialist revolution, founded by Leon Trotsky. We appeal to all workers and youth to join and take their place in this life and death conflict.



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