

Zarah Sultana's Labour resignation fails to initiate new Corbyn-led party

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Suspended Labour MP Zarah Sultana resigned from the party Thursday night and announced on X, “Jeremy Corbyn and I will co-lead the founding of a new party, with other Independent MPs, campaigners and activists across the country.”

The Socialist Workers Party, holding its Marxism 2025 festival, was ecstatic. Corbyn loyalist Andrew Feinstein delivered the news of Sultana's resignation to its opening rally that evening, to whoops and applause. “Jeremy Corbyn and she will be the interim co-leaders of a new political party,” he cheered.

On Friday, leading SWP member Charlie Kimber offered advice to the nine Labour MPs threatened with having the whip withdrawn for opposing the proscription of Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation: “Don't wait until they take the whip away. Get out now.”

All such enthusiasm was misplaced. Corbyn was initially nowhere to be seen or heard of. Within a few hours of Sultana's statement, *Times* journalist Gabriel Pogrund had posted, “I understand that Jeremy Corbyn has not agreed to join the new left party with Zarah Sultana. He is furious and bewildered at the way it has been launched without consultation.”

By the next morning, it was being as widely reported as the *Guardian*, the *New Statesman* and Novara Media that Sultana had “jumped the gun”, with Corbyn and his allies clearly briefing their displeasure.

Novara, which has been a platform for those most frustrated with the hesitation to launch a new party, and most eager to see new faces come to the fore, reported that a “committee meeting of those involved” had “voted in favour of a Sultana-Corbyn joint ticket. This was perhaps not what some in the former Labour leader's team would have liked”.

Corbyn's two closest allies during his time as Labour leader—his shadow chancellor John McDonnell and shadow home secretary Diane Abbott—then told the house

organ of the Tory Party, the *Daily Telegraph*, that they would be staying in Starmer's Labour Party. Clive Lewis, who has urged a more constructive relationship between the party's “left” and Starmer, predictably said the same. The rest have been silent.

His hand forced, Corbyn finally surfaced Friday afternoon, releasing a carefully worded statement welcoming Sultana into the fold of Independents but making clear that discussions about a new party were “ongoing”.

The same political concern animates the reluctance of the Corbyn camp and the Sultana camp's efforts to bounce him into action: a desire not to let mass social opposition in the working class and youth burst the banks of Labourite politics.

Corbyn, dedicated to the Labour Party for half a century as it moved ever further to the right, has found himself outside its ranks despite himself. Kicked out as leader and suspended as a Labour MP in 2020, it was only in the months before the July 2024 election that he finally took his leave of the party to stand against Labour in Islington—and even then in a strictly local campaign minimising any possible conflict with Starmer.

As the Socialist Equality Party wrote this week, he remains “desperate to avoid any action that could provide an impulse for a rebellion and a fightback by the working class against the Labour and trade union bureaucracy.”

He and his allies are trying to find a vehicle which will offer the least encouragement possible to this sentiment: ideally a loose umbrella organisation of “grassroots” independents carefully selected by a committee of Corbynite veterans and united only by lip service to general commitments to “peace” and a few mildly reformist demands.

Sultana made her statement on the advice of those who recognise that Corbyn's foot-dragging is politically discrediting in the face of a Labour government carrying

out the biggest attack on democratic rights in post-war British history—in defence of its complicity in a genocide, and in preparation for austerity-fuelled military spending.

Her announcement came within hours of a stampede vote in the House of Commons (385 to 26) to proscribe Palestine Action. Millions of people are being brought face to face with the brutal reality of the Labour government and driven to look for an alternative.

Sultana's statement observes that "Just 50 families now own more wealth than half the UK population. Poverty is growing, inequality is obscene" and "Labour has completely failed to improve people's lives." People "need homes and lives they can actually afford, not rip-off bills we pay every month to a tiny elite bathing in cash. We need money spent on public services, not forever wars."

Across "the political establishment... they smear people of conscience trying to stop a genocide in Gaza as terrorists" when "this government is an active participant in genocide. And the British people oppose it."

All of this is true. But the implications are as dangerous for the Corbynites as they are for Starmer's Labour Party. Because these social catastrophes—the crimes of a ruling class of billionaires and multi-millionaires snarlingly hostile to the working-class majority—cannot be solved by the tame parliamentary reformist programme to which Corbyn and Sultana want to limit workers and young people.

New left parties have already been set up across Europe in response to the rightward lurch of the old social democratic parties. And the results have been the same. Syriza carried out a massive betrayal of the Greek working class and its struggle against austerity. Podemos has done the same in Spain.

Today, amid a historic explosion of militarism and looming economic crisis, the room for manoeuvre available to these parties is even smaller. They will be rapidly whipped into line by the ruling class and will steadfastly refuse to mobilise the working class in opposition to their demands.

Despite Corbyn's gripes, his and Sultana's statements make clear that such a new party in Britain is a question of "when", not "if". However it eventually comes together, it will rapidly find itself in conflict with the leftward movement it currently speaks to.

What it can count on is the cheerleading of the pseudo-revolutionary left, exemplified by the response of the SWP, whose Marxism festival will be attended this weekend, significantly, by former Syriza Finance Minister

Yanis Varoufakis.

Having championed Corbyn's Labour leadership as the beginning of its transformation into a vehicle for socialism, the SWP, Socialist Party, Revolutionary Communist Party and others will be all the more eager to boost a new party founded on exactly the same political foundations.

RCP campaigns coordinator Fiona Lali was the first out the gate, issuing an "appeal to Jeremy and Zarah" that "now is the time to be bold", to learn from the "mistakes" of the past when they "tried to accommodate our movement to the representatives of the capitalist system".

She appeals in the friendliest terms to a man who deliberately sabotaged that movement, whose politics is thoroughly pro-capitalist and who entered two election campaigns pledged to membership of NATO, to see that "Only if we build a party based on class politics... can we build a real political force for socialism."

There will be hundreds more articles peddling illusions in a new Corbynite party.

In opposition, the Socialist Equality Party insists that the task for socialist-minded workers and young people is not to build another trap for the masses of people whose politics is far to the left of Corbyn and Sultana. It is to win and educate a vanguard in the working class who will resolutely oppose all factions of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, including its left talkers.

Sultana writes that "In 2029, the choice will be stark: socialism or barbarism." The choice is already stark, and it will not be decided by a vote for a party of Labour backbenchers, old and new.

As Leon Trotsky argued in the 1930s, ahead of the catastrophe of the Second World War, the future depends on building a new revolutionary leadership: the world Trotskyist movement, represented in the UK today by the Socialist Equality Party.



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