

Starmer welcomes President Herzog to reaffirm Labour's support for Israel's genocide of the Palestinians

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On Wednesday, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed Israel's President Isaac Herzog at the doors of Number 10 Downing Street, his official residence.

Herzog is head of a state that the UN's International Court of Justice ruled in February 2024 was "plausibly committing genocide", ordering it to take all measures to prevent any acts contrary to the 1948 Genocide Convention.

In November 2024, the UN's International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity for Israel's ongoing war on the Palestinians in Gaza. More recently, the International Association of Genocide Scholars declared that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to genocide.

The meeting took place despite widespread opposition to Herzog's visit for his support for the war, with even some Labour Party MPs obliged to concede that his visit is "not compatible with our obligations under the Genocide Convention". Starmer's readiness to meet Israel's head of state confirms that he fully supports Netanyahu's genocide of the Palestinians despite his making the token gesture of criticising Israel's latest offensive and threatening to recognise a Palestinian state.

The genocide is part of US imperialism's broader plans to assert its control over the resource-rich Middle East and its geostrategic transportation corridors, targeting Iran and its former allies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen, in preparation for a confrontation with China, from which Britain hopes to profit.

The Labour government supplies Israel with

weaponry, conducts near daily reconnaissance flights from its base in Cyprus to provide intelligence for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and provides political and diplomatic support for Israel at the United Nations. Starmer's former Foreign Secretary David Lammy said that Britain had not determined that a genocide was taking place in Gaza and there was no evidence that F-35 parts sold by the UK to Israel have been used in war crimes—even though most of the British people know that a genocide is taking place.

The Herzog meeting came just a day after Israel launched an air strike on Qatar, a close ally of the US and the UK, that targeted a Hamas leadership delegation with which it was supposedly negotiating a temporary ceasefire and hostage deal.

It came just two days after Starmer met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in London, as he moves towards recognising a Palestinian state. They reportedly discussed "the need for an urgent solution to end the horrific suffering and famine" in Gaza and the release of hostages held by Hamas. Abbas welcomed Starmer's "pledge to recognising a Palestinian state ahead of the UN General Assembly meeting later this month, unless Israel changes its course". They "agreed there will be absolutely no role for Hamas in the future governance of Palestine" and reiterated the need for a "long-term solution" to the conflict.

On Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, Israel targeted the Gaza-bound international aid flotilla of 20 boats off the coast of the port town of Sidi Bou Saïd, Tunisia, dropping incendiary devices from drones that exploded and started a blaze. The crew says no one was harmed in the incident. The most high-profile members of the

flotilla include Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and former Barcelona mayor Ada Colau. Members of the flotilla report seeing drones hovering over them ever since departing Barcelona on September 1, including moments before the attacks.

Herzog, despite his attempts to portray himself as the respectable (aka non-fascistic) face of Israel as a former head of Israel's Labour Party, has abandoned any pretence of supporting a "two-state solution" and fully endorsed the collective punishment of Gaza. He views Britain's meaningless recognition of a Palestinian state if Israel fails to meet certain conditions, including agreeing to a ceasefire in Gaza—along with the same move by other European states—as an inexplicable reward for Hamas and a betrayal of Israel by the British government.

In this, he has the backing of the US state department that has denied visas to the entire Palestinian Authority delegation, including Abbas, to the UN General Assembly meeting later this month, forcing it to relocate from New York.

Following the Palestinian attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, Herzog blamed the entire Palestinian population, justifying the war on Gaza with the words, "The entire [Palestinian] nation out there is responsible. It is not true, this rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved. They could've risen up, they could have fought against that evil regime". He has been photographed signing IDF shells due to be launched against Gaza.

On Monday, following days of speculation in Britain about his visit, his officials in Jerusalem confirmed he would visit London for three days and focus on combating mounting antisemitism in Britain, "to show solidarity with the Jewish community, which is under severe attack and facing a wave of antisemitism". They said that he had been invited by Jewish organizations to deliver speeches at communal conferences.

Thousands of people protested in support of the Palestinians outside Downing Street on Wednesday evening as Herzog met Starmer, and later outside the foreign relations think-tank Chatham House, where they banged pots and pans as Herzog delivered a speech.

After the meeting, Number 10's spokesperson said Starmer had told Herzog the strike on Doha was "unacceptable" and condemned it as "a flagrant

violation of a key partner's sovereignty" but added that "the UK and Israel are longstanding allies".

Herzog unashamedly defended the assassinations, saying Netanyahu's decision "to strike at the top leadership of Hamas terrorism is important and correct". He added, "In the face of terrorism and absolute evil, it is necessary to fight with determination and boldness in order to first and foremost bring about the release of the hostages and create a better future for us and our neighbours."

He also opposed Starmer's decision to recognise a Palestinian state, saying, "I made clear that the United Kingdom's stated intention to recognise a Palestinian state at this time would in no way help bring the hostages home, help the Palestinians, or help bring an end to the conflict."

Herzog said, "We argue, we definitely argued, out of respect. Clearly, we can argue, because when allies meet, they can argue. We are both democracies. We also had things that we agreed upon. We agreed that Iran is a worldwide threat. We agreed that Hamas must be removed.

"We agree on it, but how to do it, how to reach from this point of an idea into reality? Then, of course, starts the argument". He said he had invited the UK to send "a fact-finding mission" to Israel "to study the situation in Gaza on the humanitarian level".

Starmer defended his decision to meet Herzog, rejecting calls to cut diplomatic ties. He said, "I will not give up on diplomacy. That is the politics of students."

Next week, Starmer is to host US President Donald Trump during his state visit to Britain.



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