

Labour ‘left’ prostrate as UK Starmer government rolls out fascistic anti-immigration policy

Robert Stevens
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The Labour’s government adoption of an anti-immigration programme which has received praise from the far-right Reform UK party and the fascist Tommy Robinson has confirmed the bankruptcy of a collapsing Labour “left”.

Despite talk of a “revolt” against the Labour leadership over the measures, which include ending the permanent residency status of refugees, less than two dozen of the party’s MPs have bothered to register any form of protest.

The *Metro* led its front-page Tuesday with the headline, “Labour asylum mutiny begins”, but by the time it went to press all such talk had faded.

By the end of Monday, just 18 MPs had come forward to offer timid criticism of the proposals outlined earlier that day by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood. By Tuesday, just four more had joined taking numbers to 22 MPs—plus the Labour peer Lord Dubs. Labour has 405 MPs meaning barely above 5 percent have dared say anything in opposition to the measures.

According to the *Guardian* earlier, “the harshness of Mahmood’s plans has led to significant unease among senior Labour aides and ministers, with at *least one* on resignation watch.” It speaks volumes for the monstrosity that is Starmer’s party that one just minister among the 121 MPs that hold front bench ministerial posts (92 Members of Parliament and 29 members of the House of Lords) was thinking about resigning. But 24 hours after Mahmood published her plans—which were trailed for days beforehand in the media and by the Home Office as the most significant changes to the rights of asylum seekers and refugees since the Second World War—not a single MP has resigned any position.

For years the Labour left has functioned as a rump of a few dozen MPs desperately trying to remain in Starmer’s party. Former party leader Jeremy Corbyn, a leader of the

Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) faction of Labour MPs, was expelled from the parliamentary party five years ago and finally booted out entirely before the July 2024 general election. The official X page of the SCG whose bio states that it posts “occasional tweets from the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs” has not made a posting in the group’s name for over two years. Another page lists the number of SCG MPs at 34.

So hidebound is the SCG that it wasn’t even one of their number who dared to make initial criticisms of Mahmood’s policy, but a newer MP, Tony Vaughan. This was hardly the launching of a “civil war” in the party as claimed by the right-wing *Express*, or the harbinger of a “split” in its ranks (*Metro*).

Vaughan could only bring himself to say, “The idea that recognised refugees need to be deported is wrong,” before declaring in his next sentence, “We absolutely need immigration controls.” He pleaded that the measures would encourage “the same culture of divisiveness that sees racism and abuse growing in our communities” and it was “wrong to think that reviews of safety in the person’s country every few years will mean refugees can be returned at scale.”

But for Vaughan, who has voted at every stage for Starmer’s draconian Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, set to become law in weeks, the problem was all this was an obstacle to the workable deportations policy already underway which he supports. “It would just move huge amounts of resource away from making our asylum system work as it should—by cutting initial decision delays and the appeals backlog, sorting out asylum accommodation, making the UK-France deal work, removing those whose claims fail, etc.,” concluded Vaughan.

A number of Labour lefts, including Bell Ribeiro-Addy,

Clive Lewis, and Nadia Whittome took their protest only as far as reposting Vaughan's comments. Whittome limited her criticism in the Q&A in Parliament to the issue that Mahmood's plans would limit "access to family reunion for refugees" and that "so much of what has been announced flies in the face of decency and compassion."

Corbyn's former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell posted, "[Vaughan is] certainly not what the media would call a 'usual suspect'. I suspect he is reflecting here what many in the [Parliamentary Labour Party] feel."

In Parliament McDonnell said, "When we introduce new legislation and new procedures, it is important that we calculate the implications and where they could lead us." He asked Mahmood, "Could I ask my right honourable friend whether she has consulted the Children's Commissioner, education psychologists or others about the implications of what she is saying today", and "Can she give me the assurance that no child will be placed in detention as a result of this policy change?"

McDonnell later posted his own X comment stating that listening to Mahmood meant he had to express "my distress at [the] impact on families with children facing years of uncertainty & insecurity. Children who've already often been traumatized in their lives will be hurt. I'll not support inflicting further harm on them."

McDonnell had the whip restored in September, after 14 months without it due to it being removed by Starmer when he refused to vote for more welfare cuts. He will vote against Mahmood's measures but leaving a party responsible for policies amenable to fascists is out of the question. The 74-year old intends to finish his cozy career as a Labour MP in "maximum solidarity" with the Starmer government while making occasional swipes from his armchair.

Another "left" who has had the whip returned, Apsana Begum, said in Parliament, "Deporting families after they have resettled here because their country is deemed safe is simply wrong." But she followed up by asking Mahmood a series of perfunctory questions on her policy: "Will the Home Secretary tell us how the Government determine what a safe country is? Will she publish the criteria? She mentioned the DRC; is she really saying that it is a safe country? Will she publish all existing returns agreements, so that Members of this House, and indeed the British public, can properly scrutinise them?"

Richard Burdon, secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group, asked, "is this not just a desperate attempt to

triangulate with Reform?" He described Mahmood's paper as simply the latest of "other terrible policy errors that have been made in recent months". Burdon refused to state that this was the policy of a far-right party, complaining instead that "this failing Labour leadership is choosing to fight on terrain set by Farage. In doing so, it is *paving the way* for the first far-right government in our history."

The refusal of the Labour left to mount any fight meant that some of the opposition came from figures to the right of the party, including on grounds that Mahmood's policy would end up being too costly. Stella Creasy, who supported the right-wing coup to remove Corbyn as Labour leader in 2016, said that Mahmood's agenda was "not just performatively cruel, it's economically misjudged." She added, "It's... clear that this policy would make refugees more costly to help—if you can't stabilise your status, you will always struggle to get a job, a bank account or a mortgage, making it more likely you will be dependent on state or charity support."

The only MP to accurately describe Labour's policy was Zarah Sultana, who stated in Parliament "these measures are straight out of the fascist playbook." Sultana left the Labour Party in July and declared she would co-lead a new left party with Corbyn.

But whatever rhetoric Sultana comes out with, she and Corbyn seek at all costs to present their politically rotten and spineless Labour "left" colleagues as part of a fighting socialist alternative to Starmer.

On Tuesday, Corbyn reposted on the X platform a video of an interview he held with *Channel 4 News* earlier this year. When asked if he—as someone who had also held the post—had any sympathy for Starmer, Corbyn replied, "Being leader of the Labour Party is very, very difficult indeed."

Corbyn then paid tribute to his "old friends" in the party such as McDonnell who he described as "very active and very good people."



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