

Palestine Action political prisoners starving to death as Labour government refuses to intervene

Robert Stevens
19 December 2025

Six pro-Palestinian political prisoners on hunger strike in Britain remain in acute danger of death, as the Labour government washes its hands of their fate.

Held in several prisons, the participants in Palestine Action (PA) protests prior to the group's proscription by the Labour government are demanding immediate bail, the right to a fair trial, an end to censorship of their communications, the de-proscription of PA and the closing of all UK sites run by Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit.

Remand prisoners, they have not been convicted of any crime and are innocent until proven guilty. If they do not die first, many will spend close to two years locked up before facing trial.

The protest initially involved eight hunger strikers—aged between 20 and 31. These were Qesser Zuhrah, Amu Gib, Heba Muraisi, Jon Cink, Teuta Hoxh, Kamran Ahmed, Lewie Chiaramello, Umer Khalid. This week, two of the participants (Jon Cink and Umer Khalid) ended their strikes after 41 and 13 days respectively. Another, Lewie Chiaramello, participates on alternate days due to being diabetic.

Qesser Zuhrah remains on hunger strike after 48 days; as do Amu Gib (48 days); Heba Muraisi (47 days); Teuta Hoxha (41 days); Kamran Ahmed (40 days); Lewie Chiaramello (26 days)

Death due to lack of food usually occurs after 60-70 days but can come much sooner. Martin Hurson, an Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoner in Long Kesh prison, died after 46 days of his hunger strike in 1981. Prior to December 11, five of the hunger strikers had already been hospitalised.

At a press conference organised by the strikers' families Thursday, Dr James Smith, a qualified

emergency physician and lecturer at University College London, told reporters bluntly, "The hunger strikers are dying." He added that he was "alarmed by accounts of substandard monitoring and treatment within the prison system."

The day before, 20-year-old Qesser Zuhrah was taken to hospital on the 46th day of her hunger strike. It took a sustained protest outside HMP Bronzefield in Surrey—including Zarah Sultana, a Your Party Member of Parliament—to secure even this.

According to the *Guardian*, "Prisoners for Palestine, a prisoner-led collective in Britain, said the Prison Service was reported to have denied an ambulance entry into Bronzefield on Tuesday afternoon despite Zuhrah having been unable to stand and writhing in pain on her cell floor."

Ella Mousdale, a relative, said that—as was the case with Teuta Hoxha—Qesser Zuhrah had previously discharged herself from hospital to make her family aware of her failing health. Speaking about the gravity of the situation, Mousdale said, "This is a very deadly period," adding that relatives did not know at that moment if Qesser was still alive.

Qesser's lawyers explained how she was suffering chest pains, exhaustion, and a consistently high pulse of 100bpm "despite doing next to no physical activity". She had told loved ones she regularly collapses in prison.

Rahma Hoxha said of her sister Teuta, "The longer this goes on the scarier this gets for her and my family. My sister shouldn't even be in prison. The prison guards called her a terrorist, even though she's on remand. She said it feels as if the government is trying to bury them alive and for them to go quietly."

Labour's response has been sadistic. Justice Secretary David Lammy has stonewalled attempts by lawyers, medical professionals and politicians to even secure a meeting on the situation.

By Thursday almost 900 doctors, nurses, therapists and carers had written to Lammy, Health Secretary Wes Streeting, senior NHS officials and senior prison officials to demand action to save the lives of the hunger strikers. They backed a letter from the strikers' lawyers who warned the previous week: "without resolution, there is the real and increasingly likely potential that young British citizens will die in prison, having never even been convicted of an offence".

On December 16, Your Party MP and former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn raised the case of the prisoners in a parliamentary question, noting "they are remand prisoners", that "deep concerns" had been expressed about their treatment, and asking if a government minister could "meet their legal representatives, and their families if necessary, to discuss the situation and try to help with the safety of these prisoners?"

Junior justice minister Jake Richards' blunt "No" earned the laughter of several MPs.

The following day, during Prime Minister's Questions, Corbyn repeated the question to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who echoed Richard's refusal, stating vaguely, "there are rules and procedures in place in relation to hunger strikes, and we're following those rules and procedures."

An early day motion calling on "the Secretary of State for Justice to intervene urgently to ensure their treatment is humane and their human rights are upheld" signed by 62 MPs has been similarly ignored by the government and nine out of ten MPs.

Parliament went into recess on December 18 and will not return from the Christmas holiday period until January 5.

Labour is complicit in Israel's genocide and most of its MPs think nothing of a few more deaths on home soil. Fewer than 7 percent have signed the early day motion.

Starmer's Labour Party is less concerned to show a trace of sympathy and concern than even Margaret Thatcher's government was at the height of British imperialism's "Dirty War" against the Irish Republican Army. She felt obliged to couple a policy of starving to death 10 IRA prisoners demanding political prisoner

status with public statements insisting, "The Government is not the inflexible party in this issue," as she wrote in a public letter to Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich.

Her government had, she claimed, "repeatedly made clear how much they regret the loss of life through all forms of violence in Northern Ireland", "introduced important and humane changes in the prison regime last year" and "allowed the three Dublin TDs, the ECHR representatives and the Pope's representative to visit the Maze" where the prisoners were kept.

Thatcher's worshippers in today's governing Labour Party see no need for such face-saving hypocrisy, rejecting all pleas to intervene and prevent the deaths of young protesters who have not been found guilty of anything. Starmer is more policeman than politician.

The Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) reiterate our call: "A counteroffensive in defence of democratic and social rights and against war and genocide cannot be left to the heroic self-sacrifice of a few. Their cause is the cause of the entire working class and student youth, which must be mobilised in their defence."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact