

# Starmer risks the lives of 300,000 British citizens in the Gulf to support illegal war against Iran

Thomas Scripps  
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The criminal US-Israeli war against Iran that is supported by Keir Starmer and the Labour government has thrown hundreds of thousands of UK citizens into the firestorm threatening the entire Middle East. Starmer's speeches about his "duty to protect British lives" are repulsive lies.

Roughly 300,000 British citizens are in Gulf countries, where airspace has been closed, grounding flights. Many have been trapped on short-term visits, or in transit through the region's international hubs.

Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper told the BBC UK nationals should follow local advice and that "We are in close contact, for example, with the travel industry, with airline companies and airports and also with the governments in the region."

According to the *Independent*, plans are being pursued to bus British citizens from the United Arab Emirates, whose Dubai and Abu Dhabi airports are closed, 300 miles south to the Omani capital Muscat to then be flown home. Neither British Airways nor Virgin Atlantic currently flies there, however.

Another plan under discussion involves moving people in Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait close to 400 miles to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia—a seven-hour road journey.

This would be hard enough under present conditions. It would become a catastrophe if, as the *Guardian* reports, "Gulf states, encouraged by Donald Trump, are on the verge of ending their neutrality in the war against Iran in reprisal for Tehran's repeated 'reckless and indiscriminate attacks' on their territory and infrastructure." Qatar said Monday that it had shot down two Iranian aircraft.

Missiles, drones and debris are already falling in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and

elsewhere as Iran retaliates to the imperialist assault on its government and people. Hotels and airports have been hit. According to a roundup by the *New York Times*, four people have been killed and over 100 injured across the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

Responsibility lies entirely with the United States and its allies, which launched a long-planned war of aggression against a sovereign country that posed no threat. The attack was carried out while bogus negotiations were still underway and was openly aimed at assassination and regime change, raising the prospect of the complete dismemberment of a nation of more than 90 million people.

Labour has endangered the lives of its citizens for a war which they overwhelmingly oppose. A YouGov poll published Monday found that almost half of those surveyed (49 percent) were opposed to the US-Israeli bombing of Iran, with only 28 percent supportive.

And this has been done by a government already suffering some of the worst approval ratings in modern British history. Aware of its isolation, Labour is cynically trying to use the disastrous situation the UK and its allies have created, and the risks posed to UK citizens, as justification for its escalating involvement.

"It is clear that Iran's outrageous response has become a threat to our people, our interests and our allies, and it cannot be ignored," Starmer told Parliament, accusing Tehran of having "lashed out".

Cooper said similarly this morning that the government "now face[s] the situation where there are 300,000 estimated British citizens in other Gulf countries that are being targeted by Iranian missiles and drones. That is why we are providing support for

defensive action.”

This “defensive action” involves ongoing strikes on Iranian territory, supposedly against “ballistic missile launches.”

The foreign secretary was still at pains to stress “It’s important to say that the UK is not going to be involved directly in those strikes, but are providing support” and to claim, “It is not about support for any political or economic or broader infrastructure targets.” There was “a clear difference there,” she said, between US and UK action.

Middle East Minister Hamish Falconer insisted, likewise, “The UK is not at war.”

The Labour government is telling workers black is white. British jets are taking to the skies of the Middle East to help protect US military outposts as it wages an illegal campaign against Iran, British airbases are providing launchpads for US bombing sorties, and a British base in Cyprus is being targeted and hit by drones, with families evacuated.

In his eagerness to malign Iran, Starmer acknowledged the reality that British forces are entirely intertwined with the US offensive, telling Parliament, “On Saturday, Iran hit a military base in Bahrain with missiles and drones. There were 300 British personnel on the base, some within a few hundred yards of the strike.”

Labour politicians are desperate to dismiss the fact that the UK is being plunged headlong into another bloody war for oil and regime change in the Middle East—“simply not true,” claimed a flustered Cooper—because they fear the response in the working class.

The experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq have not been forgotten. Their lessons have been driven home by the UK’s steadfast support of Israel’s years-long genocide of the Palestinians and military strikes against Lebanon, Yemen and Iran. Large numbers will take to the streets to oppose this latest crime—swelled by the immediate threat to those in the region and by the economic consequences of the conflict at home.

Oil prices are soaring, leading Edmund King, president of the motoring association the AA, to warn *The Times*, “The turmoil and bombing across the Middle East will surely be a catalyst to disrupt oil distribution globally, which will inevitably lead to price hikes. So drivers beware, within the next 10 to 12 days

we could be seeing record prices at the pumps.”

The consequences go wider. Jorge Leon, senior vice president and head of geopolitical analysis at energy intelligence firm Rystad Energy, warned of disruption to global gas supplies vital to generating electricity: “A higher electricity price will feed through the global economy, and, in particular in the UK, (lead to) higher inflation.

“We have a direct effect, which is higher prices at the pump and higher electricity bills, but also a secondary effect, which is things will get more expensive because inflation might increase.”

The UK already has among the highest rates of inflation and domestic energy and road fuel prices in Europe.

That Starmer and the Labour Party are proceeding regardless is proof not only of the deeply reactionary, right-wing character of their government but of the deep crisis of British imperialism, desperately gambling on another brutal US war in the Middle East to improve its fortunes. These are the real threats to “British lives” and peace.



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