Thousands to protest Palantir's role in NHS, US deportations and Gaza genocide

NHS FightBack
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Thousands will demonstrate in Britain and internationally on Thursday in a “People vs Palantir International Day of Action”, demanding that governments tear up their contracts with the American data corporation Palantir Technologies.

In Britain, protests are being held outside Palantir’s HQ in London, and at hospitals, railway stations and town halls across the UK. Health Workers for a Free Palestine is helping to organise the protests among health workers, as part of its broader “No Palantir in our NHS” campaign.

The protests are part of a global week of action called by the Palestinian BDS National Committee, urging public bodies to end all contracts with the company. Amnesty International is promoting the action, backing a wider campaign against Palantir’s public sector contracts.

Nurses from National Nurses United will march on the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in San Francisco to protest Palantir’s “ELITE” app used to identify people for deportation. It incorporates Medicaid data that, according to court records, was obtained without proper authorisation.

Opposition among health workers has deepened since NHS England announced in November 2023 that a Palantir-led consortium had won a seven-year contract for its Federated Data Platform (FDP), worth up to £330 million. Awarded under Rishi Sunak’s Conservative government, it was another step in NHS privatisation, and most of the contract was redacted.

By April this year, more than 229,000 people had signed two petitions against Palantir. An investigation by former *Guardian* and *Observer* journalists identified at least 34 UK state contracts awarded to Palantir across at least 10 departments. These are worth at least £670 million, including deals with Coventry City Council and Leicestershire Police.

Co-founded in 2004 by Peter Thiel, Palantir is an organ of the US military-intelligence apparatus. Its largest US customer is the Department of Defense, and its US government revenue reached $809 million in the second quarter of 2026 alone, up 90 per cent year on year. In 2017, the *Guardian* described Palantir as a “CIA-backed startup”.

The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in 2018 that “the CIA’s venture capital branch, In-Q-Tel, was one of the first investors in [Palantir] when it was launched by Thiel in 2004. This was one year after the illegal invasion of Iraq, and Palantir played a major role in the so-called ‘counterterror’ strategies employed by the Pentagon to occupy the country and quash opposition.”

Palantir’s software is currently being deployed in the US war against Iran and in ICE raids across American cities. The Israeli military has used its AI-based targeting to further the Gaza genocide, under a partnership between Palantir Technologies and Israel’s Ministry of Defense for “war-related missions.” In April 2025, asked whether his technology had enabled the killing of Palestinians, chief executive Alex Karp replied: “Mostly terrorists, that’s true.”

Thiel is a financier of fascism and approvingly quotes the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt. In a 2009 essay, he wrote, “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.”

At the Oxford Union on January 18, 2023, less than a year before Palantir won its NHS contract, Thiel attacked the very idea of public provision: “Highways create traffic jams, welfare creates poverty, schools make people dumb, and the NHS makes people sick.” He dismissed popular support for a service defended by millions as the jewel in the crown of the welfare state as “Stockholm syndrome,” which only “market mechanisms” could fix: “Rip the whole thing from the ground and start over,” the multi-billionaire said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, technology firms gained intellectual property rights and profited from unprecedented NHS data access. Palantir built a COVID “data store” in 2020, aggregating patient records. Its first contract, awarded without tender under Boris Johnson, cost £1, and was later extended for two years at £23 million, again without competition. By the 2023 FDP tender, Palantir staff had been embedded in the NHS for three years, and former officials told the *Financial Times* the contract specification essentially mirrored Palantir’s existing dashboards and data architecture.

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Under Starmer's government, Palantir won a £240.6 million Ministry of Defence contract in December 2025, again without a tender. This followed a "strategic partnership" between the Ministry of Defence and Palantir, announced in September and worth £750 million. As the genocide in Gaza intensified and hostility mounted, Starmer's government mooted activating the NHS break clause, but Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who is now Defence Secretary, refused to act.

NHS England and Palantir claimed its technology facilitated 110,000 extra operations, a 15 per cent reduction in discharge delays, and the removal of 800,000 patients from waiting lists. These claims have since collapsed. NHS England now concedes its before-and-after comparisons included "other variables" which had "not been controlled for."

Even the *Telegraph*, a consistent supporter of NHS privatisation and Palantir, cited only an unpublished memo about a 12 percent rise in theatre use. The 217,846 patients supposedly "removed" from waiting lists were merely flagged. The *Financial Times* found 84 percent of removals came from Chelsea and Westminster Trust, where waiting lists actually grew by 20,000 over three years.

Palantir now faces such hostility that Tom Watson, Labour's former deputy leader, has been deployed as an ideological firefighter. Watson, who played a critical role in removing Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, announced last week that he was joining Palantir as a senior vice president, calling it "the most interesting company on the planet, doing work of real consequence." He declared, "Some criticism [of the firm] is propaganda," and that "part of my role will be to correct false information."

Thursday's organisers call on governments to act in public sector workers' interests by terminating Palantir's contracts. One protest will be held outside Number 10 North, Burnham's Downing Street office in Manchester. Aware of mounting hostility to the Gaza genocide, Burnham, prior to his being sworn in as PM, was reported by the *Telegraph* to be considering invoking the contract's early break clause.

Amnesty notes that the review date for NHS England's contract is February 2027, with a decision being made much sooner. It states of Thursday's protest: "It's a pivotal moment to remind our new Prime Minister and Government that this is a movement—and it's growing".

But fighting Palantir cannot be entrusted to pro-business governments, whether in Britain, the US or any other country, which have handed the company such vast profit-making opportunities in the first place.

Palantir ran its lobbying through Global Counsel, co-founded by New Labour architect Peter Mandelson. The firm solicited the help of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein to find wealthy clients. In February 2025, shortly after Mandelson became Starmer's ambassador to Washington, Global Counsel arranged an undisclosed meeting between Starmer and American billionaire and Palantir co-founder Alex Karp. Mandelson was sacked that September and is under investigation over his contacts with Epstein as a government minister, including as business secretary.

As health secretary under Gordon Brown from June 2009, Burnham oversaw the tender process that eliminated the last NHS-only bidder for Hinchingbrooke Hospital, laying the groundwork for the first privatisation of an NHS hospital, completed under the Conservative-led coalition in 2011. On winning the Labour leadership, Burnham stated, "I will be a pro-business leader of the Labour party as I was a pro-business mayor of Greater Manchester."

For all talk of Burnham being prepared to end Palantir's NHS contract—but only through a break clause, leaving its other contracts intact—the first attempt to force the issue was shot down at this week's annual Labour conference in Liverpool. The Conference Arrangements Committee blocked an emergency motion from the Labour-affiliated Socialist Health Association and three constituency parties, over "numerous allegations of [Palantir's] involvement in serious breaches of human rights."

Defending the NHS against corporate and military penetration is inseparable from health workers' fight for a democratically run, fully funded health service.

NHS FightBack calls for the cancellation of every Palantir contract and for the data giants to be taken into public ownership under the democratic control of the working class. This requires rank-and-file committees in every hospital, independent of Labour and the union bureaucracies that have suppressed every struggle to defend the NHS. It can be won only as part of the struggle for the socialist transformation of society.

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