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Socialist Equality Party (UK)

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UK Labour's support for genocide in Gaza:

build a mass party for socialism!

One year from the start of the Gaza genocide, Israel's atrocities against the Palestinian people are being intensified. The barbaric assault on Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital where refugees were burnt alive inside their makeshift tents is part of a new stage of ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter in the north of Gaza, while the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launches bombing attacks on the West Bank.

The assault on Gaza has already metastasised into a regional war, with Lebanon under systematic military bombardment that has killed thousands. Now, Iran is being targeted by Netanyahu's fascist regime with the full backing of the United States, which has deployed troops to Israel for the first time ahead of imminent missile strikes against Iranian targets.



Palestinians try to put out a raging inferno after the Israeli military targeted tents in the courtyard of Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir al Balah, Gaza Strip, Monday, October. 14, 2024. [AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana]

The only response of Britain's Stop the War Coalition (STWC) to this massive escalation has been to double down on its bankrupt and impotent appeals for the Labour government to abandon support for Israel. This is epitomised by Jeremy Corbyn, who is the de facto head of the STWC.

On October 14, Corbyn and his group of four other Independent MPs elected based on their opposition to the genocide in Gaza—issued a humble appeal to Labour's Foreign Secretary David Lammy to stop backing Israel's genocide.

Even while indicting the government as an accomplice to war crimes, Corbyn's letter appealed to the war criminals on Labour's parliamentary benches to “change course and stand up for our common humanity”.

Corbyn implored: “The government could have stood up to Israel the day it was elected. It could have opposed the genocide in Gaza. It could have ended military, economic and diplomatic support. It could have defended the equal application of international law.”

As Corbyn knows full well, nothing will convince the Labour government to do any such thing.

But his letter persisted with this political charade, posing a list of five questions to Lammy, who as Shadow Foreign Secretary described Israeli missile strikes on refugee camps last November as potentially “legally justified”.

Corbyn's questions included: “What red lines, if any, does Israel have to cross for the government to end its diplomatic and political support?”, “What is the government doing to facilitate urgent de-escalation and prevent an all-out regional war?” and “Does the UK government oppose genocide?”

All red lines were crossed months ago, and the Labour government is stepping up its military and logistical support for Israel's ethnic cleansing, including intelligence flights over Gaza, and deploying military forces in the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean in support of airstrikes on Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Starmer's government was shaped through a five-year campaign to expel Corbyn and his supporters from the Labour Party, denouncing opposition to Zionism and defence of the Palestinian people as “left-wing antisemitism”. The Blairites declared that Corbyn's opposition to NATO and nuclear weapons made him “unfit to be prime minister”.

In the course of this witch-hunt, thousands were expelled or left the party in disgust, with Corbyn refusing to mount any struggle against his right-wing opponents, insisting that Labour be maintained as a “broad church”. This ended in his replacement by Starmer and Corbyn’s own expulsion from the Labour Party.

Corbyn was handed the leadership of Labour on two separate occasions, with mass popular support. His political legacy is one of prostration and the collapse of Labour’s “left” into total insignificance.



Jeremy Corbyn speaking at the Stop the War on Gaza rally in London, December 9, 2023

An Early Day Motion sponsored by Richard Burgon on October 8 underscores this rout. It does nothing more than back a toothless UN resolution calling for an end to Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine and a ban on UK military aid to Israel. It won the backing of just 51 MPs. Of these, just 22 were from the Labour Party. A further 11 MPs who sit as Independents voted in support, six of them either expelled from the Labour Party (in Corbyn’s case) or suspended (Burgon, John McDonnell, Zarah Sultana, Apsana Begum and Ian Byrne) for voting against various right-wing policies.

As further testament to the rout of the “left”, when Burgon moved a similar motion last year while the Tories were in office, it secured the backing of over 90 MPs.

The Corbynites’ parliamentary pantomime has only one genuine impulse: mounting a pretence that a fight is taking place when there is no fight at all against this Labour government and its active support for genocide and war.

Corbyn’s overarching mission has been to prevent a political break with Labour, explicitly and repeatedly opposing any call for a mass socialist party against it. Not a single one of the MPs expelled or suspended by Starmer has dared resign and challenge the government. They

are all creatures of this pro-imperialist party, seeking to uphold its domination over the working class.

It's long past the time to end the search for political chimeras. No agreement can be secured from Labour to end the genocide. A pillar of NATO since the aftermath of World War II, the Labour Party developed throughout the 20th century in step with the deepest requirements of British imperialism. Its reformist policies, junked decades ago, were always advanced with the overriding aim of preventing the emergence in the working class of revolutionary opposition to capitalism.

Millions of workers and youth have marched to end the genocide, and the vast majority view the Labour Party as a hostile force and recognise that a new party is needed. But this recognition must be transformed into the conscious fight for socialism. Corbyn refuses to call for a new mass party for socialism—not because the time is not yet ripe, but because it would win huge popular support.

The price for delay in fighting for such a party is the destruction of Gaza, the mass slaughter of the Palestinians, an expanding regional war backed by the US and Britain targeting Iran—with hundreds of thousands already dead in NATO's proxy-war in Ukraine against Russia—and the ever-present danger of an escalation to nuclear war.

Within Britain, Labour's right-wing policies, its nationalist drum-beating, mass austerity and the persecution of immigrants and refugees, is fuelling the rise of the far-right. All of the horrors of the 20th century are being posed anew.

Where is this new party going to come from? Not from the Corbynites or the pseudo-left outfits that trail pathetically in his wake. The Socialist Equality Party states unambiguously: such a party must be built now, uniting the working class internationally against genocide and world war, and linking this to the fight against austerity and the evisceration of democratic rights. We call on all workers, youth and students who agree with this fight to join the SEP and help build the necessary leadership in the working class in the struggle for socialism.