

300,000 join London protest against the Gaza genocide and Israel's widening war

Our reporters
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Over 300,000 protested in London Saturday to mark one year of Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza. The march was swelled due to the spread of Israel's war to Lebanon, amid threats of attacks on Iran's oil fields and nuclear facilities.

The march was dominated by young people. During discussion with campaigners from the Socialist Equality Party, participants were deeply concerned that a year of protests had not brought an end to mass murder and ethnic cleansing, and that the slaughter was now becoming merged into a regional war targeting Iran.

But instead of addressing these questions, speakers on the platform insisted that "pressure on the streets" was somehow working and that the future for the struggle was more of the same.

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, now expelled and an independent MP, posed the question: "One year on," with most of the world's population standing with the Palestinians, "how is it that Israel, a country of 5 million [sic], is able to mount such a massive attack on so many of its neighbours?"

He answered himself by identifying the backing of the United States, Britain, Italy and Germany for Israel and their supplying its government with "the most sophisticated weapons the world has ever seen—\$20 billion worth of US weapons have already been exported to Israel."

"This country is also complicit," he stressed, making no mention of the fact that this complicity began a year ago under a Conservative government and not only continues but has deepened under Sir Keir Starmer's Labour government. Nor that this is despite the UK seeing some of the largest anti-genocide protest in the world, week after week.

Nor, as usual, did Corbyn link opposing the war in

Gaza to opposing NATO's proxy war in Ukraine—with Starmer in the forefront of the advocates of direct missile attacks on Russian territory

Corbyn cited the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluding that Israel's actions amounted to genocidal acts against the Palestinian people and its request for arrests warrants against President Netanyahu and his Defence Secretary Yoav Gallant—though he claimed the warrants had been issued—and the condemnation of Israel's actions by the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council. None of which has shifted the position of US and British imperialism by a millimetre.

During the last national protest, representatives of the Stop the War Coalition were pointing to Labour's blocking of a few arms contracts to Israel and its declaring it would not oppose the issuing of arrest warrants if this was agreed by the ICJ. This was no longer possible. Starmer has responded to the targeting of Lebanon and Iran by reaffirming his backing for Israel's "right to self-defence", and the Royal Air Force once again took active part in that "defence" and in attacks on the Houthis in Yemen. This left Corbyn scrambling to cite any achievement for a campaign of appealing to the government for a change of heart.

He was forced to declare instead that "It's quite significant that today, the French president has called for a halt to arms supplies to Israel, just an hour ago," before citing this as an achievement for "our voice and our noise."

Macron's continued rule is widely seen as illegitimate by the working class after he lost the National Assembly elections but refused to allow the victorious New Popular Front to try and form a government and installed a right-wing government led by Gaullist Michel Barnier by presidential fiat. He

faces mass opposition and the possibility of this meeting up with an explosive response to his continued support for Israel's war, especially now it targets Lebanon, a former French colony. He is doing the minimum possible to shield himself.

But that is enough to satisfy Corbyn, who concluded with his usual non-specific, mentioning no names appeal "to this government... until you withhold supplies, until you're serious about supporting the Palestinian people, we're going to be here in Whitehall, in Birmingham, in Glasgow, in Edinburgh, in Newcastle, in Bristol, Southampton, in every city... I simply say this to the Prime Minister. We are not going away."

The more-of-the-same-message was reiterated by Stop the War's convenor Lindsey German, who hailed "our 20th national march in a whole year" as "an absolute record in British protest, and we should all congratulate ourselves for everything that we have done to take the cause of the Palestinians on the streets every single week."

As for future plans, the only initiative offered was the UK-wide day of action on Thursday, October 10, in support of an immediate ceasefire.

Backed by the Trades Union Congress, the toothless and token character of the action proposed, which excludes strikes, was made clear by Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) Alex Gordon, who pleaded, "Whatever you can do at your workplace—if it's a lunchtime meeting, if it's a cake sale, if it's a walkout—do it in the name of an immediate ceasefire."

The SEP circulated as a leaflet the September 29 WSWs Editorial Board statement, "The murder of Hassan Nasrallah: Imperialism abandons all restraint on global war". This explains that "a settlement of accounts with Zionism, the vicious attack dog of American imperialism, cannot be achieved except through the development of a movement of the working class in the Middle East and throughout the world.

"The movement against war must be animated by the perspective of international socialism, aimed at ending the obsolete nation-state system that is inseparably bound up with imperialist war and colonialism and replacing it with socialism."

The SEP intervened in other protests around the UK, including campus-based protests at Manchester and Cardiff and at a freshers' fair at Birkbeck University,

London.



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