

UK protesters speak on Gaza genocide, ceasefire and the Labour government

March organisers urge attendees to hold government “to account”

Our reporters
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The police crackdown on Saturday’s national Gaza demonstration in London underscored the need for a political perspective which can animate a mass movement against British imperialism at home and abroad.

But workers and young people could find nothing of the sort from the organisers, the Stop the War Coalition (STWC) and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC). Throughout the last 15 months of Gaza protests in the UK, the message from the platform has been the same: that pressure must be placed on the blood-soaked British government—first of Rishi Sunak and now Sir Keir Starmer—to withhold support from Benjamin Netanyahu.

This Saturday was no different, with protesters encouraged to hold Downing Street and Washington to account over support for a ceasefire which in no way ends the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the brutal apartheid regime. Stop the War Coalition leader Lindsey German declared: “The ceasefire is only the beginning of justice for the Palestinians. It’s only the beginning of what is required. We will keep demonstrating. We will keep protesting.

“We will hold Starmer and [UK Foreign Secretary David] Lammy to account. Donald Trump is in the White House on Monday and he needn’t think that he’s going to get a free pass either”.

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn stated that the “demands that we’ve been making constantly in all these demonstrations are of course in solidarity with the Palestinian people, but there are also demands on the government of this country.” He repeated his call for the UK to stop supplying arms to Israel, pleading, “Yes, you can if you want to do it.”

Summing up, Ben Jamal of the PSC said the “ongoing and primary task” is that “we end the complicity of our government, our public bodies, our corporations with this genocide and with Israel’s decades-long oppression of the Palestinian people. This did not begin on October the 7th. So we demand that our government act to ensure that the ceasefire is implemented.”

Members of the Socialist Equality Party attended the march to speak with protesters, distributing leaflets with material from the *World Socialist Web Site* and selling literature including *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War* and *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gaza Genocide*.

Reporters for the WSWS discussed the genocide, the ceasefire

and the Labour government with demonstrators.

Jacob told our reporters, “Today I’m here as part of the Jewish bloc and it’s particularly important to show up today given the reasons they’ve tried to cancel the march, which in my eyes are spurious.”

“I’d say that if we tie the fate of the Jewish people to the fate of the state of Israel, then we are putting an ancient people and an ancient religion and an ancient culture in a very, very, very dangerous position. If you care about keeping Jewish culture, religion and everything going, then we need to think about detaching that from what is inherently a settler colonial project.

“And it’s not just Jewish people. In order to achieve liberation, we all need to be able to step outside of our own narrow identities and be able to look across and say that’s what solidarity is.”

Jacob said of the Labour government, “The British state will do what the British state does until we organise to change the nature of what that state is. I don’t expect anything from Starmer. My focus is on organising and building power and pushing people to do things that we need them to do. The Labour government, I wouldn’t even say they’re a disappointment because I expected nothing from them.”

Geoff explained, “I’m here today to show my solidarity with the people of Palestine, to call for an end to the slaughter of Palestinian people, to call for the originators and perpetrators of the genocide in Gaza and the ongoing ethnic cleansing in the West Bank to be dealt with in The Hague by the International Criminal Court.”

Of the ceasefire, Geoff said, “I don’t trust the Israeli government. I don’t trust those who are supposed to be overlooking things, particularly the United States. I note that more than 100 people have been slaughtered even since the soon-to-be ceasefire was announced officially on Thursday. I note that there has been a ceasefire for nearly 60 days in Lebanon, which has seen Hezbollah not use its weapons and Israel continue bombing and shelling and killing people.

“So, it’s a potential first step. Am I optimistic? No, I’m not. I want to see long-term peace in Palestine. I think it’s for Palestinians to decide what form of state they would wish to have. “Personally, I like the ideas of Jeff Halper, an Israeli Jewish sociologist, who has written a wonderful book about decolonizing Israel. I think his idea of one state, multi-ethnic, all people with the

same rights, no system of apartheid, is what I would love to see ultimately. But I think we're a long way from that, obviously."

Harriet, a journalist, told our reporters she was "here today because although a ceasefire has been announced, Palestinians in Gaza continue to be killed by Israeli forces. We need the genocide to end. We need the apartheid to end. We need the occupation of Palestinian territories to end and the Israeli blockade on Gaza to end as well.

"They are suppressing any opposition, any voice coming from that area in Gaza. They are not allowing the journalists to go and cover the events. Even the journalists who are covering, like Al Jazeera, have been killed over the last period. A state that kills journalists wants to suppress the truth. When journalists from international media are finally allowed into Gaza, we do not know what horrors they will uncover.

"I feel sad and ashamed that so many British journalists have not spoken out for their brother and sister journalists in Palestine being murdered by the IDF."

Harriet continued, "I have no time for the Labour Party of Keir Starmer. I think they are Tories in red ties, quite frankly. I think they are on the side of the Israelis. All they talk about is Israel's right to defend itself. What about the Palestinian right to freedom, right to life, right to dignity? Starmer never mentions that. He downplays Palestinian deaths and suffering. He never contextualises the conflict. The past 76 years never happened."

Shafiq, an IT worker, said of the ceasefire, "It's not over yet. Palestine is still occupied. America is still giving arms to Israel. Britain is still giving arms to Israel. The occupation still continues. Gaza will still be under a blockade, the West Bank will still be gradually occupied, and more and more settlements will be created. Israel still occupies the Golan Heights. We've still got an expansionist agenda. Lebanon, South Lebanon is still invaded by Israel."

May, part of Anti-sweatshop Activists Against Apartheid, explained, "We want to show people that our work we do on colonialism and the textile sector is intrinsically linked to the occupation in terms of challenging colonialism, challenging capitalism. All of this intertwines. We need the occupation ended; we need the end of capitalism."

Speaking about the ceasefire, she said, "I think we're all just concerned about what's to come, when the ceasefire will be actually implemented what that looks like in the next few days, let alone months. There's a lot of uncertainty."

After WSWs reporters raised the threat of wider wars, including against Iran and Russia, May said, "I mean, this is all geopolitical, right? Gazans are pawns in a bigger picture of, like you said, imperialism... I think it's just sad that Gazans are in the middle of this bigger picture of what we're seeing with the UK and the US. Their lives don't matter; they're disposable."

Natalie told our reporters of the ceasefire, "We know this is more about strategy than anything to do with helping or caring about Palestinian life. It's completely a military strategy. So we know and we can anticipate something worse is about to happen... We all need to stand behind Palestinians because they represent so much of what is happening everywhere in the world."

Answering a question about the war in Ukraine, she said,

"They're all proxies. I think the thing here is that there's numerous countries being used as proxies for bigger powers who are having their geopolitical wranglings for power and dominance. But the main reason we're here is because the human crisis in Gaza is unlike anything we've witnessed... this level of asymmetrical warfare against an unarmed population is just beyond anything.

"And to watch the complicity, the hypocrisy of our governments, Western governments, is beyond anything we could have ever comprehended. So, I think that's why we're still here, because we're making a point to our governments that you did not represent us and we won't stop until they're in the Hague, alongside Netanyahu and everyone directly involved.

"We've found out very clearly that the government is not here to serve in our interest. The only hope we have of overcoming this is by class, I think, class solidarity, and understanding the way these bigger systems disadvantage all of us and connecting the dots in a way that we might not have before."

The WSWs interviewed **Annie** after police began arresting scores of protesters. She responded, "It's a peaceful march. There's no reason for this. People are not causing a problem; the police are causing the problem. They've been mobilised from all over the country to come here today on overtime to intimidate us. They're not meant to be a political force, but they've been turned into a political force.

"They have these new powers. They can stop a protest whenever they deem it's too noisy. These are dangerous powers. People have a right to protest."

Asked about the Labour government, Annie said, "No one in this country supports them. The minority of people who put these people into power, they're seeing what the reality of it is now. There's no one in that parliament, it doesn't matter if you go blue, red, yellow, whatever party, there's no one of any standing who actually is for the people anymore.

"Now they've signed some hundred-year pact with Ukraine or whatever to give three billion pounds every year. And I'm like, what about the people in this country who are starving, who are hungry?

"And how much has this cost today with police coming from all over the country to intimidate us? It's like an army of people against us. The government is pitting itself against the people."



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