

Thousands protest in UK National Day of Action against billions in welfare cuts

“You are killing my mum to bomb someone’s son”

Our reporters
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Around 1,000 disabled people and their supporters marched in central London Wednesday against the £5 billion in welfare cuts announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in her Spring Statement.

The demonstration was called by Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) as part of a national day of action, with a hashtag #WelfareNotWarfare.

Protesters assembled outside the Downing Street residences of Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Reeves, before marching to a lobby of Parliament at Old Palace Yard to lobby MPs as Reeves delivered her statement.

Referencing hundreds of thousands of people who have died due to over a decade of austerity cuts—including 600 people who have committed suicide after having disability benefits withdrawn—protesters chanted, “No More Deaths from Benefit Cuts!”

Lauren connected spending billions on weapons funded with cuts to welfare. Her homemade placard read, “You are killing my mum to bomb someone’s son”.

Another disabled person said, “I cannot go on record. I will be hunted down by the DWP [Department for Work and Pensions]. I’m protesting today because I believe people are more important than death machines. I want to see a society where no one picks on one another, where there are no scapegoats with people of different colour and different abilities.”

The withdrawal of benefits by Labour “will put pressure on people who are very sick, there will be excess deaths as a result. There may well be more crime committed when people cannot feed and clothe their children. This is not a socialist government, it is no different to the Tories. Starmer is an odious toad with no spine, no moral compass. He sees himself as a world dictator. I compare him to Stalin.”

“If you cannot kill by benefit cuts, then drop bombs on them. That is Starmer’s message to the world. Starmer is not really in charge of anything, his buttons are being pushed by the very rich people in this country guided by the people who own the media—the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express*, the extreme wealthy billionaires. That is where Starmer wants to be, to be like them.” There could be “a solution if enough people become conscious of what is happening in this country. It’s a failing democracy. It is this chaos or some sort of alternative.”

Speaking at the event were former Labour “left” leader Jeremy Corbyn, who after expulsion from the party sits as an Independent MP, and his former shadow chancellor John McDonnell. McDonnell lost the Labour whip last year for voting against the withdrawal of winter fuel payments from 10 million pensioners.

Corbyn and McDonnell offered no means for anyone to fight, bleating moral appeals for Starmer and Reeves to reconsider the cuts. McDonnell said, “Disabled people are facing the biggest cuts to their benefits in a decade, causing immense harm... This is not what Labour governments do.” His solution, as he advocated last week, is that the Starmer government consider what can only be described as a pain monitoring exercise as the welfare cuts are imposed, to establish what “threshold of suffering is needed before an alternative route is taken to supporting disabled people?”

Corbyn said of welfare cuts, “Instead of all this stuff let’s raise the Income Tax threshold to take the poorest people out of Income Tax altogether, bring in a wealth tax for those with assets of over £10 million pounds, and with that we start, start, to redistribute wealth and power in our society.”

Around 60 people protested in **Leeds** outside the bus station.

Daniel, a disabled welfare worker, spoke about government plans to restrict access to the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). “I’ve got both personal and professional experience with PIP. I think helping people with them professionally has shown me how much support is potentially needed to fill in some of these assessments. They are made to be quite difficult, made to trip people up.

“I think it’s shocking.”

He saw the welfare cuts as “a really easy way for government to create some stir, to create some momentum in whatever direction they’re going. [Deputy Prime Minister] Angela Rayner recently said that working class people don’t want handouts. It’s not a handout. It’s enabling people to access life in the same way that other people do. And I can’t see how that is a bad thing, both for the agency of the person themselves, but also for the civil service, the National Health Service, which is suffering.

“I work in the third sector. A lot of our job now is relating to doing what the NHS would have done.”

James said, “I’ve come here as a member of the public. My daughters are both autistic, aged 15 and 18. I’ve seen how much disabled people need support, especially through school, and the funding needs to radically go up, to make school a decent place to learn for everyone, especially for disabled kids.

“I wasn’t a fan of [Tony Blair’s] New Labour at all, but they did help disabled people compared to this lot trying to balance the books off of some of the most vulnerable people in society. PIP is the gateway to other benefits like carers allowance, and you’re going to get families who are going to be destitute. Then they’re just going to hit the next set of services that’s going to get overwhelmed, like social housing.

“If we don’t sort society out, we’ll be slipping towards fascism. If we keep letting them say these things, that the problems in society are due to individual characteristics of people in poverty, the implication is that people in poverty are what’s wrong with society. It’s a short step for them to question what to do with them.”

Asked his thoughts on former Labour leader Corbyn, who refused to wage any struggle against the Labour right before being booted out of the party by Starmer, James said, “It was always a moonshot, wasn’t it, the whole Corbyn project? They were beaten down and eventually collapsed.”

Another protester, **Daniel**, said, “I get angry talking about what the Labour government’s doing at the minute

by taking benefits off people who can’t work. For example, you might be blind, so therefore you cannot do any manual work because you’re blind. There are people without any legs, people in wheelchairs.

“By implying it’s a moral decision that’s good for the country, it’s quite disgusting. When you’re framing it as a moral choice, what you’re really saying is: you people go away and die. We need to prepare for war again.

“The Labour government are not left-wing at all. About as left-wing as Nigel Farage. They’re the continuation of neo-liberal politics.

“We’ve just had a pandemic, which is ongoing and has a major impact on people. The longer it goes on, the more research to do, the more we find out how COVID affects people. They’re closing that down. Like, ‘No, it’s finished, let’s close that down.’

“But when they are using the word ‘moral’, it’s actually a political choice. Nothing to do with morals. It’s you imposing your political perspective upon society and then saying there’s no other way. It’s neo-liberalism, which is a continuation of capitalism on steroids.

“Look at what’s going on with Gaza. Our government, the people in power say that’s not a genocide. I can go on my phone and see people being bombed every day, kids being bombed and murdered and starved to death. The British resumed flying over Gaza to give intelligence to Israel to bomb, and apparently, that’s not a genocide.

“[Health Minister] Wes Streeting was on TV saying we’re ‘over diagnosing mental illness’. ADHD—is that over diagnosing people, or is it just made up? They are really saying, ‘You’re not fitting into the capitalist system. You can’t sit down. You can’t be a productive money maker.’”



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