

# COUNTERFIRE

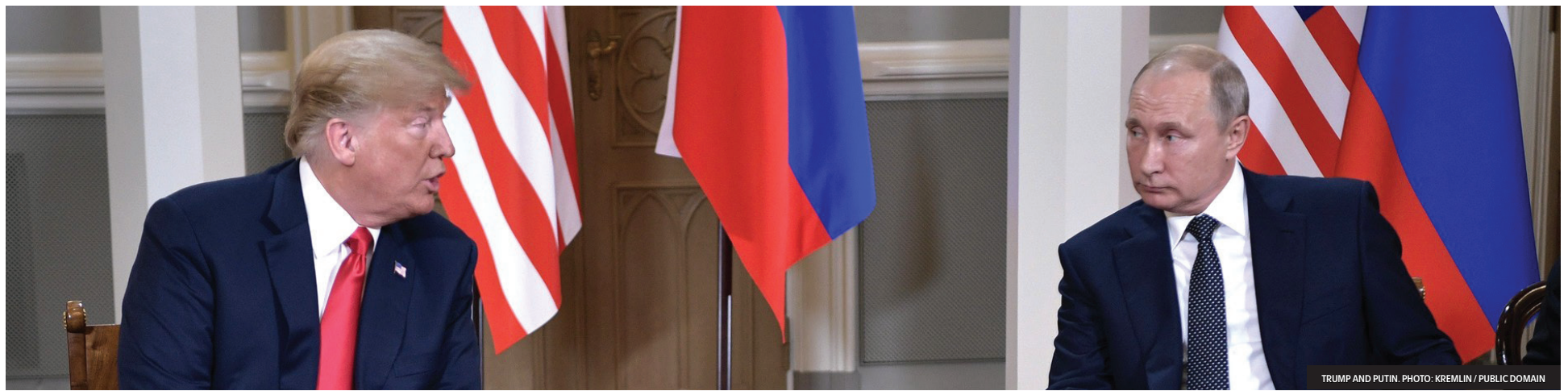
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# STARMER HAS GOT TO GO

WELFARE  
NOT  
WARFARE



## NEWS



## RUSSIA - UKRAINE WAR

# Negotiations by military means

VLADIMIR UNKOVSKI-KORICA

Trump boasted that he would end the Ukraine war in one day when he became US president. Six months on, Russia is poised to launch a summer offensive across the front.

On the face of it, Trump has clearly failed, but the situation is markedly different now. Trump has demonstrated that Washington understands its proxy war with Russia is running out of road. Militarily, Russia is on the front foot; politically and economically, Russia is not internationally isolated, receiving support from many BRICS states.

Trump was therefore keen to change

course. This proceeded on twin tracks. He wanted firstly to demonstrate to Kyiv, and its European backers, that it could no longer expect the levels of support it had had under Biden, in order to entice the Ukrainian leadership into a peace deal with Russia. He wanted secondly to demonstrate to Russian president Vladimir Putin that he was prepared to make significant concessions for a peace deal in Ukraine, but also to soften the emerging Beijing-Moscow axis.

Hence Trump's humiliation of Zelensky in the Oval Office, then the deal that was meant to guarantee US control over Ukrainian rare-earth minerals, and, finally, critically, the pause in US

intelligence supply to Ukraine in Russia's Kursk region, leading to the rapid collapse of Ukraine's incursion into Russian territory. Meanwhile, Trump has simultaneously attempted to placate Putin. He has spoken with Putin directly, above the heads of his allies in Europe. And Trump's terms for peace included legal recognition of the annexation of Crimea and gradual easing of Western sanctions, as well as an end to Ukraine's NATO ambitions.

But it is one thing to let Kursk slide back in Moscow's hands, and to offer concessions, it is another to walk away with nothing after all the military expenditure there by the West. That is why, in reality, things have been stickier than Trump

thought.

It should not be surprising, then, that when Ukrainian and Russian delegations met to talk peace in Istanbul, little of any solidity was agreed. However, during the talks Russia climbed down on issues like demilitarisation. The 16 May negotiations also agreed the largest prisoner exchange since the start of the war, of 1,000 on each side.

None of that is to say that Russia certainly would negotiate in good faith or not wish to inflict a painful and unjust peace on Ukraine. Indeed, that remains likely, and Russian officials continue to threaten that each round of negotiations will see worse terms for Ukraine, implying that the military reality on the ground will determine the character of any final peace deal. That is why Russia launched some of the biggest drone attacks on Ukraine since the peace talks on 16 May, and why it has continued to intensify military operations as part of a summer offensive.

Despite talks not proceeding according to Trump's formulae, some kind of process appears to be underway, in fits and starts. The West and Ukraine now face the same choice as in March-April 2022: hammer out a deal with Russia, in which all sides make compromises, or continue the war, in which there have been hundreds of thousands of casualties on both sides so far.

As Ukraine's Ambassador to the UK and former Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, General Valery Zaluzhny, recently said, in the days after Istanbul II, it is no longer credible to claim that Ukraine will return to its 1991 or even 2022 borders. Yet this was precisely the premise on which the decision to continue the war back in March-April 2022 was made.

Surely, ending the war as soon as possible, painful as the compromises will be, is the preferable and more rational course of action, as it will save lives on all sides and allow for the rebuilding of Ukraine. This is what the anti-war movement has argued for all along.

## ISRAEL AND USA WEAPONISE GAZA AID

ZAHID RAHMAN

The Israeli government, after 20 months of genocide and eleven weeks of total blockade which has caused mass starvation, has started allowing some humanitarian aid into Gaza. Netanyahu described it as 'minimal' and the result of pressure from 'friends' who have told him 'We cannot accept images of hunger, mass hunger.'

The obscure group allowed to deliver aid, The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, is a private entity based in Delaware set up in February 2025. The GHF's sources of funding have not been disclosed, yet is being paraded by the American and Israeli governments as an alternative to the already-established agencies on the ground in Gaza.

Its credentials were immediately put in doubt when its executive director, Jake Wood (a former US Marine), resigned on 25 May, claiming his job is in contradiction with 'humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.'

Involved with GHF are private security contractors UG Solutions and Safe Reach

Solutions. The head of UG Solutions was a member of the US special forces who served tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. The founder of SRS was a former CIA officer who served as station chief in Kabul. Two mercenary groups with connections to the American military establishment should bring into question the impartiality and purpose of the aid-distribution system.

This system has been criticised as too centralised and inefficient. Only a designated family member may pick up a 20kg box of supplies from one of only four distribution centres in the Gaza Strip. Provisions aren't made for the elderly, orphaned or the injured, who would find it harder anyway to access food in Gaza.

The aid being distributed is unsuitable for Palestinians who lack the clean water and fuel needed to cook. Even more outrageous are reports that some of the food is Israeli-branded, which suggests that Israeli firms are profiting from the humanitarian crisis created by their own government.

The concentration of the sites, three in the south and one in the centre of Gaza, is a deliberate attempt to move starved

Palestinians southwards in the direction of the Egyptian border – in line with Netanyahu's stated aim of total ethnic cleansing.

The Palestinians who manage to arrive at the aid-distribution centres face long, degrading lines flanked by fences that have been described as 'cattle pens', while the IDF carry out biometric and facial-recognition checks operated remotely. Humiliation is not incidental, it is intentional.

The aid-distribution centres have now been described as 'death traps' after the IDF opened fire on Palestinians as far as 1km away from the centres, killing dozens and injuring hundreds. The Red Cross reported head and chest wounds, suggesting deliberate targeting.

It's clear that the aid-distribution system is a mask that provides Israel with cover to continue its extermination of Palestinians. It is imperative that the global solidarity movement that has successfully pushed our governments back ramps up the pressure to turn mealy-mouthed words into actual action to stop the facade and end the genocide.

## LABOUR'S PRICING PARENTS OUT OF CHILDCARE

FEYZI ISMAIL

The Starmer government is bent on attacking all aspects of welfare in its austerity drive, and this includes nursery provision. Reeves' February budget announced increases in national insurance by employers, but when the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) surveyed 700 nurseries across England, 96 percent said they would increase fees to parents by an average of 10 percent as a result.

Moreover, the survey revealed that 39 percent of nurseries planned to offer fewer childcare places, 17 percent said they would make a loss, and 14 percent said their business was at risk. Cuts to funding for local councils means that Council-run nurseries are not exempt from increasing fees.

From September this year, working parents can access up to 30 hours of free childcare a week for children aged nine months and older. This was a policy carried over from the Tories. But Starmer's cuts cancel out childcare expansion.

In Hackney, the Council is removing the subsidies it used to provide, which means that some households will see a 70% increase in fees from September.

Nurseries are effectively put in a position where they either increase fees or face uncertainty. The impact on families is unacceptable. Many pay more for childcare than rent and mortgage costs, others are working less or taking pay cuts to save on nursery fees, while others are having fewer children.

Meanwhile Starmer is massively hiking military spending. Providing free universal childcare would be a fraction of this cost.

The campaign to protect nurseries in Hackney is attempting to lobby the Council to reverse the removal of subsidies, and mobilise support from the across the borough. It organised a protest outside the Council's Cabinet meeting last month, and is organising a demonstration to the Town Hall on 23 June.

It is a political choice not to fund nursery provision, one that will not make the world safer for children but more dangerous.

## EDITORIAL



KEIR STARMER POSES WITH A FIGHTER JET. PHOTO: SIMON DAWSON / NO 10 DOWNING STREET / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

# STARMERLAND IS NO HOME FOR THE WORKING CLASS

COUNTERFIRE

This is the country we live in:

- ▶ Wages are way below the European average
- ▶ Pensions are some of the worst on the continent
- ▶ Housing costs are the highest in the continent
- ▶ A quarter of all children are brought up in poverty
- ▶ The UK has the highest train fares in Europe, with some of the longest journey times
- ▶ The UK's electricity costs are the third highest in Europe
- ▶ Spending on arms and warfare is the highest in Europe

Keir Starmer was elected on the promise to end Tory austerity. But he and his iron-brained Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, are doubling down on austerity.

They are paying a heavy electoral price. Opinion-poll ratings for the government are the lowest for any new administration in forty years.

Voters know exactly why Labour is failing. The problems they think the

government is least capable of solving are in health, housing, and the economy. And these are also the issues voters care most about, not immigration or refugees.

This is terrible news for Labour since they are precisely the problems that the government has said it is going to solve but which its obsession with austerity is making worse.

The Runcorn by-election result and the council-election results on the same day crystallised all these concerns in the minds of Labour MPs, especially those whose disquiet for their own ability to remain as MPs is sharper than their concern for their constituents' welfare. After all, Runcorn was the 48th safest Labour seat in the country and it was lost to Reform.

Starmer is already reacting to this pressure. The screeching 180-degree U-turn over Gaza is the most obvious concession to critics, although it is also a response to signs that the Trump administration is finding Israel's genocidal policy in Gaza to be more of a hindrance than a help in its overall plan to revive the Abraham Accords.

But Starmer's partial retreat on winter fuel allowance is also meant to take the sting out of his critics' case. The problem for Starmer is that this kind of 'messy

reset', as the *New Statesman* called it, will further deepen the crisis in Labour.

The more he gives ground, the more hollow and inconsistent he sounds. It is very unlikely that his rigidity and sense of entitlement will allow him to find another model of leadership, not least because of the utter conventionality of his economic and social programme.

More seriously, just as he is attempting to placate the left, he is also making gross adaptations to Nigel Farage's racist rhetoric. And this is making an already threadbare ideology look positively self-contradictory at best, and openly racist at worst.

The working-class movement needs to rise to the challenge of this moment. We need to rebuild the anti-austerity movement both to defend the livelihoods of working people and to stop Farage benefiting from Labour's implosion.

The People's Assembly demonstration on 7 June is a good start. It has the backing of most trade unions and most social movements. Now we need to build a massive protest outside the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool this autumn.

Starmerland is no home for working people. We need to, and we can, build another.



## WEEKLY BRIEFING

Cut through the media bias with Lindsey German's analysis on the latest political developments straight in your inbox every Monday morning



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## RANK-AND-FILE ROUNDUP



# LABOUR FALLS SHORT ON SCHOOL FUNDING

On 22 May, the independent School Teacher Pay Review Body finally released its recommendation for a 4% pay increase for teachers, including £650m to help cover the costs, which the government has accepted. It is a significant improvement over the initial 2.8% the government offered earlier in the year, but according to the National Education Union, it still falls £400m short of what is needed fully to fund the deal.

The new offer is progress, and is evidence Starmer is feeling the heat from education unions. In a recent indicative ballot, NEU members voted overwhelmingly to reject the initial pay offer (93.7%) and to strike if necessary (83.4%).

In recent years, the NEU has been a leading light in the trade-union movement. We forced school closures during the Covid pandemic in 2020, saving untold lives, and were the sole schools union to strike in our

last pay dispute in 2023. Tens of thousands have joined the NEU since then, and the number of reps has grown as a result. The NEU has been a driving force behind the People's Assembly anti-austerity march on 7 June in London.

Nonetheless, it must be recognised that the last pay dispute in 2023 ended in a compromise deal. When eight days of NEU strike action in the spring met with Tory intransigence, the leaders of all four education unions threatened a full system shutdown in the autumn, which could have forced the government to deliver an above-inflation, fully funded pay rise. Yet the unions settled without that fight, and the deal amounted to a pay cut.

I think this has led to some disorientation and demoralisation in our union. Although our recent indicative ballot showed continued readiness to strike among a layer of teachers, turnout fell

clearly short of the 50% ballot response threshold that would be needed to validate an actual ballot (47.5%).

Contrast this to the resident doctors, who stood their ground in their last pay dispute, with eleven rounds of strike action, and won a 22% pay rise over two years, making a good start in their journey toward pay restoration. This year, the doctors' union, the British Medical Association, has called its own pay offer of 4% 'derisory' as resident doctors are still paid a quarter less, in real terms, than they were in 2019.

The implications for pay restoration and funding in education mirror those in health. In his testimony to the STPRB, Daniel Kebede said:

'We have got the highest primary class sizes in Europe. We have the highest secondary class sizes on record ... There are no "efficiencies" that can be made without further damaging education ... Teacher pay has been cut by over a fifth in real terms since 2010...'

Teachers understand all this and care very deeply about it. To inspire teachers to take action and parents and students to support them, we should be calling for full pay restoration, plus additional funding to expand school services. If not now, when? Surely, it is better to do so when health workers are campaigning for the same?

To be sure, it would be a big win for trade unions if the government commits to the additional £400m to fund the pay rise, but the NEU and the other education unions should register a dispute with the government whether or not they do. In addition to workplace meetings, we could build mass rallies, marches and community forums to mobilise support as the Birmingham bin workers have done.

We won't win it all in one go, but if the doctors are any indication, we'll get a lot closer if we try, and our unions will be stronger for it. We need to think bigger.

## BIRMINGHAM BIN STRIKE IS CRUCIAL FOR ALL WORKERS

KIERAN CROWE

Birmingham council has been granted a High Court injunction against effective strike action by the city's bin workers. The council insists that essential workers must suffer for its own failures by imposing staggering wage cuts of up to £8,000 and abolishing senior jobs.

Tory cuts, carried on by Starmer, have meant local councils are unable to fund the essential services they manage. This is why Birmingham council is slashing pay and conditions for bin workers who have had absolutely nothing to do with creating this crisis.

The megapicket on 9 May showed both that mass solidarity can be effective, and that lots of ordinary people know perfectly well that the bin strikers are simply fighting for justice. Polling by Unite the union in Birmingham shows that despite the undoubted suffering that the strike has caused – because bin workers are essential to health and cleanliness – a clear majority of Brummies wouldn't accept the cuts themselves and would strike in the same position.

Birmingham City Council is under pressure from both the Labour national government, and from other local administrations around the country, not to compromise on their attack on bin workers, because that would prove that other groups of public-service workers could also strike for fair pay. Even worse, local councils in many areas – because they are also failing financially – want to be able to cut workers' wages and conditions and want the Birmingham bin workers to lose in order to use the dispute as an example of how to do it.

A defeat for this strike would be a disaster for workers. Wage cuts will become the order of the day and administrations will use legal threats and the police to push workers into line. There needs to be a social movement of solidarity to stop that from happening.

Unite should be getting Birmingham bin workers to address their members around the country, to rally support and get people to come to Birmingham to deliver solidarity, and to speak out for the Birmingham bin workers in their own local areas. Local trade union branches and trades councils should also be holding solidarity meetings nationally.

This strike is the most important workers' struggle since 2022, and the whole movement should be uniting to help them win.

### PICKET LINES THIS MONTH

#### BIRMINGHAM BIN WORKERS

Union: Unite  
Dates: Continuous  
Location: Sites across Birmingham

#### SCOTTISH WATER

Union: Unite  
Dates: 2-8 June  
Location: Inverness, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Irvine  
Protest on 4 June at Shieldhall Depot, Glasgow, G51 4SU

#### OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST

Union: NEU  
Dates: 3, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19 June 2025;  
7:30 to 9:00  
Location: Kirkby, NG17 7DH;  
Worksop, S80 2SF; Worksop S81 7EN

#### LEYTONSTONE SCHOOL

Union: NEU  
Dates: 4 June  
Location: E11 3AJ

#### THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

Union: NEU  
Dates: 4, 5, 10, 11, and 12 June  
Location: Grove Park, NW9 0JY

#### CT4N BUSES NOTTINGHAM

Union: RMT  
Dates: 12, 18, 25 June  
Location: Sherwood Bus Depot, NG5 2JN

#### DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Union: UCU  
Dates: 13, 14, 19 June  
Location: Durham, DH1 3LE

## INTERVIEW

# The Lancashire model: 'We are stronger together'



The local elections that took place on 1 May saw Reform perform particularly strongly, but amidst the gloom, the strong showing of left Independent councillors in Lancashire offered a shaft of light for an alternative future. **Michael Lavalette** spoke with recently-elected Lancashire county councillors **Almas Razakazi** and **Maheen Kamran** about what motivated them to take on the establishment parties.

**Can you start by telling us a little about your background and why you decided to stand?**

**AR:** I suppose for a long time I've been on social media, appalled by the events taking place in the world, but not directly involved in 'politics'. I was involved with charity work addressing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and youth work in my community but not 'politics' as such. But gradually I became involved directly in political activities as a result of the smear campaigns against Jeremy Corbyn, the BLM movement – where I spoke at a rally for the first time ever! – the Covid scandal and then the Palestine movement.

It was Palestine that was the tipping point into regular political activity. I joined the national and local marches. I was involved in a range of activities and fundraisers and last year I was involved in the general-election campaign with Preston Independents.

The scale and the depth of the Palestine movement provides us, in my opinion, with the opportunity and the resources to build a sustained challenge to the establishment parties and to demand that we put people before profit.

**MK:** My dad is heavily involved in our local community and he inspired me to try to make a difference in the world. At the age of fifteen, I joined Burnley Youth Council. I'm the youngest councillor elected (I'm just eighteen) but I was born and raised in central Burnley and I see firsthand the challenges our community faces: poverty, poor housing, lack of opportunities for young people. Daily life is hard for people and I'm determined to speak up and speak out for the people I represent.

**Picking up on Maheen's point, you both represent very poor parts of Preston and Burnley. What are the burning issues that need addressing?**

**MK:** The area I represent has some of the worst health, poverty and inequality data in the country. Health and social care is in crisis, mental-health services are overstretched, all of which leaves people without the support they desperately need. Our schools are underfunded, our environment under huge pressures. These are not just abstract political problems, they are the everyday realities of working people in this country.

**AR:** The issues in Preston are remarkably similar: poverty, poor-paying jobs, crumbling services and a real housing crisis with a choice between unaffordable mortgages or unaffordable rents. The cost-of-living crisis is really pushing people to the edge and the Labour government seems determined to implement even more austerity.

The danger is that, if we don't get organised and offer an anti-establishment alternative, Reform will gain a hearing and start to put down roots, but that will mean more racism and more division in our communities.

**On the Reform question, they now control Lancashire County Council. How do we effectively oppose them?**

**AR:** I think we have to do three things really. First, as councillors, we have to hold them to account. They have claimed to oppose the two-child benefit cap, and promised to build new schools. Fine, let's see how they turn their words into actions. They are also threatening jobs and more privatisation and we must oppose that.

Second, we have to link our work in the council to protests in the communities against the consequences of their actions. We



MAHEEN KAMRAN

need to link with the unions, the community groups and be part of any and all campaigns to defend services and oppose racism and division.

Third, we need to show in practice that we represent people better, that we really are the anti-establishment voice.

**MK:** I'm determined to deliver for the people who elected me, to show that I can be a councillor who is always around, putting their interests first and working hard to improve people's lives and community. We will challenge Reform if it promotes discrimination or racism in anyway, or if it fails to deliver the respect, rights and resources our communities rightfully deserve.

**How can we spread the example from Preston and Burnley and ensure we have similar councillors across the country?**

**MK:** I think we have a respon-

sibility to lead with integrity and show what's possible when councillors are truly rooted in their communities. You can't just show up at election time, you need to be part of the fabric in our communities, living the lives of people in the area and prepared to listen and act.

**AR:** I agree. We need to be out and about in our communities. We need to speak to people who might not be as engaged with 'politics'. Many people get turned away by official politics, but politics is everyday life: it's about work, housing, racism, lack of leisure facilities, lack of public transport etc and most people have opinions on all of these!

But I also think we are stronger together. Pulling the Independent Network together across the country will make us much, much stronger – it will give us a national as well as a local focus and lay the foundations for a real challenge to the political mainstream.



ALMAS RAZAKAZI

# Divide to oppress and exploit

## THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION IN A GLOBAL SYSTEM

**The centrality of political arguments opposing immigration depends upon ignoring how modern capitalism uses exploited and segregated labour to avoid investment and labour costs, argues Kevin Crane**

Keir Starmer, following Labour's heavy defeat in the local elections at the hands of the far-right Reform UK, is using rhetoric that we would have associated with the neo-Nazis of the British National Party in the recent past.

He tells us that Britain was running an 'open borders experiment', which is a straight lie: immigration levels were a design feature of the economic model, not as some sort of mistake or accident. He also claimed that the 'the damage it has done to our country is incalculable.' This is really extreme rhetoric that will be difficult for him, or anyone, to walk back from, which is developing into an ideological crisis for the Labour Party and its base in liberal British society.

The majority of our media has raged against immigration for decades, with only a small number of left-of-centre voices disagreeing. Politicians routinely seek to obtain good publicity for themselves by positioning themselves as anti-immigration, often styling themselves as rebellious figures who are 'speaking up' or 'starting a debate', as if it weren't one of the most frequently discussed topics. The quality of this debate is always terrible: new arrivals are constantly blamed for things – without evidence being provided – that are caused by the many decades of neoliberalism, such as crumbling public services and high housing costs.

Successive governments and oppositions, whichever of those positions Labour and Tories have happened to find themselves in, have almost always attempted to position themselves as being the keenest on border controls and their opponents as being most pro-immigration. Labour did not do this during Corbyn's leadership, but that was a considerable blip (albeit one that does leave some scope for embarrassment for some Labour figures now, like Starmer himself).

### A strange gap between ideology and policy

There is a huge contradiction between a media and political culture that sees

immigration as so entirely negative, and the reality that Britain's economy makes extensive use of new arrivals as both workers and fee-paying students in our education system.

Refugees are constantly subjected to racist scapegoating and propaganda, but are actually far smaller in number than you would expect from the way journalists and politicians talk about them. Prior to Covid, the Office of National Statistics reported that around 0.45% of immigrating people were refugees as opposed to visa-holders, who are either coming for work or study or are the immediate family of someone who is.

There was a surge in refugees post-Covid, driven by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Britain making asylum offers to large numbers of Ukrainian civilians as many Western countries did. Even if the government could 'stop the small boats' – leaving aside the serious humanitarian questions that raises – it would not make a difference of quality to immigration as a whole.

The country's institutions are, at the very least, taking in people from overseas without much problem, indeed it could be argued that they are relying on them coming. However, if that's the case, why do the institutions not make a positive argument for continued immigration? The explanation is a system of extreme exploitation that has relied on deepening and leveraging inequalities in both British society and the wider world, which is deeply embedded in the structures of both the private and public sectors. Changes to these structures will not be delivered by any quick fix, certainly not that either Keir Starmer or Nigel Farage are offering.

### The globalised economy is not just products

It is often easier for us to talk about the story of globalisation in terms of the movement of products than of people, but both



KEIR STARMER  
PHOTO: SIMON DAWSON/  
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NIGEL FARAGE  
PHOTO: HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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are important. Pre-globalisation, during the post-war boom, immigration served a very direct and obvious purpose: British manufacturing was expanding, and capitalists could not recruit enough workers from the resident population, so they sought workers from the declining British Empire.

By the early twenty-first century, though, de-industrialisation and neoliberalism meant that factories of all kinds had declined, leading to some parts of the country becoming very depressed economically and a growth of inequality both between regions of the country, and within those parts of the country where the new

'knowledge economy' and massive financialisation were creating wealth.

Jobs making consumer goods were declining and being replaced with lower-waged and mostly non-union-organised jobs doing logistics or customer service. Public services were widely privatised, particularly in the care sector, which is under local government control and historically a low political priority.

Throughout both the private and public sectors, the outsourcing of 'support work' flourished, so a small number of massive service companies would supply workers for jobs like cleaning. The effect of all

these things was to seriously depress wages in manual jobs, even while the economy was growing and businesses were making profits.

### Is there a word for 'apartness'?

For many businesses, employing immigrants as workers came to be their entire commercial strategy, and this became even more the case when the EU expanded in 2004, and pools of potential recruits expanded beyond the post-imperial 'Commonwealth' to states that had been in

the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War.

Immigrant workers could be paid wages which resident workers couldn't accept as high enough as housing costs really began to spiral upwards because of financialisation.

Immigrant workers could also be disciplined and deployed in ways that would have been viewed as totally unacceptable or utterly absurd by resident workers: such as employing them strictly for picking season in the agricultural sector or housing them in what are essentially barracks next to workplaces (meat-processing plants and logistics warehouses being prevalent

examples) that are otherwise very geographically far from towns and cities.

Division is the key explanation for the apparent contradiction between the British establishment's declared ideological opposition to immigration and its commitment to it in practice. The highly exploitative way in which capitalists use immigrant workers relies on them being separated from resident workers. For many people in Britain they are kept out of sight and out of mind: ghettoised into parts of the economy few resident people would ever directly work in.

To ensure these workers stay hidden from widespread public awareness, the media-political establishment has been almost exclusively talking about immigration in the context of refugees, even though refugees are an extremely small proportion of actual immigrants.

### Cutting the wage, and the social wage

A supply of labour from overseas got deeply entrenched into how capitalists expected to be able to make business decisions in Britain, and it didn't just mean keeping wages down. Capitalists and policymakers used it as a reason to treat investment in our care and education systems as an unnecessary overhead.

That mindset got even more entrenched as austerity set in in the 2010s.

Just as our social elites do not protect our food infrastructure because they arrogantly imagine that they will always be able to import food, they arrogantly fail to invest in skills and training because they assume that the quality of workforce they need will always just turn up to work in Britain.

We've already seen what happened when this supply of bargain labour gets disturbed. In the early months of 2021, the food sector was complaining that it could not recruit seasonal workers to pick fruit, or to work in meat-packing factories. When the government queried why they didn't just employ British residents to do it, the bosses of the businesses complained about British workers being 'too lazy' to employ and that resident workers would 'just up and leave' whenever someone tried to recruit them for such industry.

If Johnson couldn't get through a single year without letting the food sector recruit foreign workers, how does Starmer think he is going to remove immigrant labour permanently from practically the entire economy? The British population is ageing, and it's getting increasingly unwell due to cuts to public services and rising poverty.

There are huge gaps in massive areas of skilled work: Britain has not been training or giving experience to new generations of workers in health care, or construction, or engineering, to name but a few. The reliance on cheap labour in areas like food production and logistics has allowed businesses to get away with shocking under-investment. It would take money, time and skills that aren't currently there to train staff, automate processes and revitalise our crumbling transport infrastructure to solve all this.

This 'We back British Workers' pose will not work as policy, because British capitalism cannot and will not adjust to it. The *Daily Telegraph* has already begun to run 'lazy British worker' articles to this effect. The likelihood is that what we will get in practice is a brutal theatre of Trump-like attacks on immigrants, while the exploitative use of their labour continues in the shadows, becoming even more squalid as it is forced into the network of the sinister free-trade zones and free ports that are being established around the country.

There certainly isn't going to be some general increase in wages as a result of such a policy, since capitalists are simply going to do less business in preference to paying out for more expensive labour. Nor would there be any decrease in housing costs in regions of the country which aren't already very economically depressed.

Reducing foreign student numbers is simply going to put even more higher education facilities at risk of closure, and thousands of jobs will go both directly and indirectly wherever one does. This will be catastrophic for many smaller British cities where a university is a tent-pole employer.

Socialists cannot argue that border controls could possibly be fair and non-racist in a world shaped by imperialism and capitalism, but we can also not accomplish a true freedom of movement in that world. The only way to fight for actual justice is confront organised exploitation itself, for which we need a politics that breaks from neoliberalism to the left, not to the right as Labour is currently claiming to do.

## THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS



# Police lead assault on women's rights



by **Terina Hine**

Searching women's homes, seizing digital devices and accessing confidential medical records, often without a court order, as part of a clampdown on abortion is an abuse of police powers and a direct attack on women's rights. The consequence of this action is a tragic rise in criminal prosecutions for pregnancy loss and late abortion.

In December of last year, police guidance was produced on how to support a Victorian-era law, the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, used increasingly to criminalise women who have suffered a stillbirth or undergone a late abortion.

The guidance, issued by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC), allows police to examine women's devices for menstrual-cycle and fertility-tracker apps, Google searches and any communications related to a suspected pregnancy. It also allows for medical records to be accessed.

Draconian, intrusive and undeniably damaging to women's healthcare, the guidance was drawn up without public consultation or any reference to medical experts or abortion providers and has been overwhelming condemned by these bodies. The guidance must be dropped, the Act must be repealed and abortion taken out of the criminal law altogether.

Just last month, Nicola Packer, one of six women to be put on trial using the 1861 law, was found not guilty of illegally terminating her pregnancy after taking abortion pills beyond the legal limit of ten weeks. This followed more than two years of trauma and persecution. Packer was prescribed the abortion pills by a registered provider in the 2020 lockdown and always denied she knew her pregnancy was more than ten weeks' gestation.

Packer's case revealed how dangerous fear of prosecution is for a woman's health. After delivering a foetus at home, it was clear the dating of her pregnancy was incorrect. Suffering complications, she went to hospital where she initially refused to tell medical staff she had taken the abortion pills, fearing the consequences. She was right to be afraid. She was discharged from hospital straight into police custody, bleeding, in pain and in shock.

During the time it took for Packer's case to be heard, another woman, Carla Foster, was tried and sentenced to prison for an illegal abortion. Foster's sentence was suspended on appeal, but not until she had spent 35 days behind bars.

Packer and Foster are not alone. Since 2022, six women have faced a criminal trial for a late termination. For every one case that ends in court, at least ten others are subjected to prolonged police investigations. In some cases, women who were never formally charged were forcibly separated from their children while under investigation.

The Offences Against the Person Act was introduced in 1861, and until 2022 was used only three times to bring prosecutions for late abortions. However, since 2022, scores of women have been persecuted if not prosecuted. In one instance, a teenage girl of fifteen was arrested.

Globally, a woman's right to choose is under attack. There have been calls to use cases like Nicola Packer's to change the abortion law, limit access to at-home pills, and reduce the 24-week limit. Nigel Farage in a recent speech said (again) that allowing abortions up to 24 weeks is 'utterly ludicrous'.

While attempts are being made to restrict access to abortion, there are also moves towards decriminalisation, and on 2 June, MPs debated a Decriminalise Abortion petition with the support of more than thirty medical, legal and public-health bodies.

No woman should be threatened with jail, a humiliating police investigation or the impingement of her privacy, nor should she suffer the horror of years of being under investigation for ending a pregnancy or experiencing an unexplained loss. The recent police guidance has fuelled hostility and has caused suspicion to be raised in cases where stillbirths and premature labour were entirely natural.

Hard-fought biological rights for women must not be allowed to be diluted. And an outdated Victorian law must be repealed.

## NHS PAY OFFER IS A CONTINUATION OF TORY AUSTERITY

**SIMON MIDGELEY**

On 22 May, the NHS pay review bodies recommended a 4% rise for doctors, and a 3.6% rise for nurses and all other NHS staff. Labour Health Minister Wes Streeting immediately agreed to these recommendations, and announced they would be implemented without negotiation.

However, between 2008 and 2022, the value of junior doctors' pay shrank by a cumulative percentage of 31.7%, due to the impact of inflation. In April this year, after the pay rise secured by a determined fight by the BMA in 2022-23 which saw resident doctors take 44 days of strike action, their pay was still worth 22.6% less in real terms than it was in 2008.

The BMA response to the suggested 4% rise in 2025 has been clear: it fails to redress historic losses of pay and provides no path to pay restoration.

For all other NHS staff, including nurses, midwives, paramedics, ambulance drivers, physiotherapists, health-care assistants, porters, cleaners, caterers, etc. the 3.6% pay rise is even worse.

Professor Nicola Ranger, RCN General Secretary and Chief Executive, quite rightly, said: 'This pay award is entirely swallowed up by inflation and does nothing to change the status quo – where nursing is not valued, too few enter the profession and too many quit.'

The Starmer government's acceptance of the pitiful rises recommended by the NHS Pay Review bodies clearly shows that, under Starmer, Labour is set on continuing, not correcting, the erosion of NHS staff pay that workers suffered during sixteen years of austerity and Tory government. It is effectively a policy of austerity 2.0 in the Health Service.

Health unions are currently consulting their members on the pay deal. NHS workers should reject this and fight it with all their strength.

### THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

**1381**

13th: The Peasants' Revolt: Kentish rebels enter London, attacking prisons and the Savoy Palace in response to the imposition of a poll tax to pay for war

**1848**

22nd: The June Days: French workers stage an uprising following the closure of national workshops for the unemployed

**1867**

25th: Harriet Law becomes the first woman admitted to the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association (The First International)

**1908**

21st: Women's Sunday: Between 500,000 and 750,000 people march and rally in London for women's suffrage, marking what was then the biggest demonstration in British history



**1928**

14th: Che Guevara born

## MARXISM 101



17TH CENTURY MERCHANT TRADING. PAINTING BY CLAUDE LORRAINE, 1637

# A HISTORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE: FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM



by **Alex Snowden**

Exploitative and deeply unequal class societies have existed for thousands of years. Capitalism, though, is only a few hundred years old. Capitalism first emerged in western Europe, developing out of an earlier type of class society known as feudalism.

Tracing the early development of capitalism helps us understand this massive world-historic shift. Examining this history also focuses our attention on the distinctive elements in capitalism: what makes it different from feudalism and other pre-capitalist class societies.

Marx devoted some attention to explaining the transition from feudalism to capitalism. This transition remains the most recent shift from one mode of production to another.

Let's make a quick contrast between medieval feudalism and modern-day capitalism. In the first scenario, we have an overwhelmingly rural, agricultural society. Most people live in villages and work on the land. The mass of peasants work for feudal lords, who possess power as well as

wealth.

Land is the dominant source of wealth. The feudal ruling class exploit the peasants and use the surplus (the profits) generated primarily for conspicuous consumption and the raising of armies, rather than re-investing it in new technology or the development of productive forces.

In the second scenario, in our world today, we have a mainly urban society transformed by successive waves of industrialisation. Most people work in industry and services, providing the wealth for an exploitative capitalist class.

Money is everywhere. Everything is a commodity. What drives the system forward is no longer ruling-class consumption, but the endless drive to accumulate capital.

Much else follows from this economic and social transformation. Political institutions like parliament and the modern state developed alongside capitalism. The nation-state became much stronger, with the world clearly divided into nations.

There was a transformation in ideas and attitudes. Feudalism encouraged extremely fixed ideas: a peasant could not aspire to be anything but a peasant. Religion was the main ideological force that buttressed these conservative ideas.

Capitalism ushered in a greater sense of social mobility and fluidity. There was greater emphasis on democratic and political rights. However, it has also evolved a set of ideas designed to justify massive

inequality and unaccountable economic power. The media and the education system are more influential than religion in reinforcing its dominant ideas.

The feudal ruling class was contradictory. It was hugely wasteful, devoting surplus wealth to grand consumption (from extravagant castles to lavish entertainments) and also military expenditure to defend its land and wealth. However, it did also invest, at least modestly, in new agricultural technology. Feudalism was not entirely stagnant.

It was the developments within feudalism that laid the basis for a new economic and social order: capitalism.

Feudal lords had a surplus of goods that, increasingly, they would exchange for other goods from outside their own area. Networks of trade developed. A social layer of merchants, profiting from trade, emerged. There was growth in towns, which served as centres of trade but also as sites for specialised handicraft production.

Merchants took some of the surplus previously held by feudal lords, while handicraft production created new wealth for the artisans responsible. These two social groups developed distinct material interests over time.

The towns began to develop their own dynamic, with relatively rapid progress in productive technology and a greater emphasis on trade. This also led to money becoming more important.

Some of the small-scale urban

producers expanded their operations. They found a workforce among the people who had moved from the countryside to the towns, who became early wage labourers. A system of commodity production developed, built around trade, money, and the work of those who possessed nothing but their labour power.

The growth of this market economy was fuelled by advances in the forms of production: by new technology and improvements in productivity. This could be a violent and destabilising process, with land enclosures in the countryside pushing agricultural labourers towards the towns. This created an embryonic class of wage labourers. Colonial conquest was another factor in acquiring wealth for the earliest capitalists.

In *Capital*, Marx viewed the emergence of capitalism as the inter-relation between four elements: growth of trade, the use of waged labour, the removal of the peasantry from the land, and the accumulation of capital.

The antagonism between capitalist and worker became the central one in society. As the new capitalist mode of production developed, it brought about an acceleration of productivity unimaginable under feudalism.

Yet the spoils of this growth has always been concentrated among the capitalists at the expense of workers. This inevitably generated constant struggle between capitalists and the workers they exploit.

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

Counterfire is a revolutionary socialist organisation that has been central to the Palestine, anti-war and anti-austerity movements over the last two decades. We are committed to transforming our society from one based on the profit motive to one built on the needs of working people.

Real change can only be achieved by working-class people organising themselves to challenge their bosses and the government that stands behind the bosses. It depends on mass movements, popular protests, and on workers taking action. We believe that this kind of popular opposition requires a dynamic extra-parliamentary left, rooted in workplaces, communities, and colleges.

We also believe that all the struggles against oppression are connected. Racism, sexism, and every other form of oppression and discrimination are a product of a society based on the exploitation of working people by a tiny minority of capitalists. War, climate change, and inequality are all symptoms of a chaotic system based on market competition.

In the process of helping to build every kind of resistance to capitalism, we bring to bear the lessons of the past and a Marxist analysis of the present. Counterfire puts the case for a revolutionary socialism that ultimately seeks popular control of society and genuine liberation for all.

Our members are actively involved in the protest movements and workers' struggles around the country, organising and supporting protests and picket lines. We have Counterfire branches across the country helping to build solidarity with struggles locally and nationally, and popularise socialist ideas and analysis.

As well as putting on a wide range of debates, public meetings and other events around the country, we run one of the best-read websites on the left which has scores of contributors and tens of thousands of readers every month and we distribute thousands of copies of the left's first free paper – which has now expanded to 12 pages.

Join us and get involved today.

## COUNTERFIRE & MOVEMENT EVENTS

Counterfire branches around the country organise regular in-person or online public meetings discussing key topics of the moment. We also organise national and regional events like Revolution! and Marxism in a Day periodically. Our events are open to all, and listed below along with key movement dates for your diary.

See [counterfire.org/events](http://counterfire.org/events) for updates.

### LONDON

#### No to Austerity 2.0: People's Assembly National Demonstration

Saturday 7 June, 12pm  
Assemble: BBC Portland Place, W1A  
See [peoplesassembly.org.uk](http://peoplesassembly.org.uk) for updates

### NORTH LONDON

#### We Demand Change North London People's Question Time

Tuesday 10 June, 7pm  
Finsbury Park Mosque, 7-11 St Thomas's Rd, N4 2QH

### NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

#### The resistible rise of Reform

Wednesday 11 June, 7pm  
Tyneside Irish Centre, NE1 4SG

### PRESTON & CHORLEY (online)

#### The resistible rise of Reform

Thursday 12 June, 6:30pm  
Join on Zoom: [bit.ly/4dBDkjU](https://bit.ly/4dBDkjU)

### LEEDS

#### We Demand Change West Yorks Summit

Sunday 15 June, 12 - 5pm  
Beaver Works, Leeds, LS10 1AD

### DEVON & CORNWALL (online)

#### The resistible rise of Reform

Tuesday 17 June, 7pm  
Register on Zoom: [bit.ly/4jAeORR](https://bit.ly/4jAeORR)

### LONDON

#### Rally to support Kneecap

Wednesday 18 June, 9:30am  
Westminster Magistrates' Court,  
Marylebone Road, NW1 5BR

### EAST LONDON

#### Marxism in 30 minutes

Wednesday 18 June, 6:30pm  
Mulberry Hall, St Margaret's House, 21  
Old Ford Road, E2 9PL

### DONCASTER

#### The Fiery Spirits - book launch

Thursday 19 June, 6pm  
Waterstones, 27 Frenchgate Centre, DN1 1LJ

### LONDON

#### National march for Palestine

Saturday 21 June, 12pm  
Central London  
See [stopwar.org.uk](http://stopwar.org.uk) for updates

### BRISTOL

#### We Demand Change Bristol Summit

Sunday 22 June, 12 - 5pm  
Malcolm X Community Centre,  
141 City Road, St Paul's, BS2 8YH

### HACKNEY (LONDON)

#### Stand up for affordable childcare

Monday 23 June, 5:30pm  
Hackney Town Hall, E8 1EA

### HARINGEY (LONDON)

#### Trump: the first six months

Tuesday 24 June, 6:30pm  
All Good Bookshop, 25 Turnpike Lane,  
N8 0EP

### HARINGEY (LONDON)

#### The Fiery Spirits - book launch

Friday 27 June, 7pm  
All Good Bookshop, 25 Turnpike Lane,  
N8 0EP

### WITNEY

#### The Fiery Spirits - book launch

Thursday 3 July, 6pm  
Waterstones, 13 Woolgate, OX28 6AP

### LONDON

#### Rally to support Chris Nineham and Ben Jamal

Monday 7 July, 9:30am  
City of London Magistrates' Court,  
1 Queen Victoria Street, EC4N 4XY

## LOCAL GROUPS

Counterfire has local branches across the country building the movements of resistance and popularising socialist ideas by organising public meetings, local activity and distributing our free newspaper.

To find out more about a branch near you or to help set one up where you are, please contact the national office.

### NATIONAL OFFICE

[info@counterfire.org](mailto:info@counterfire.org)  
07807 123472

Branches:

### BIRMINGHAM

### BRIGHTON

### BRISTOL

### DEVON & CORNWALL

### DONCASTER

### ESSEX & SUFFOLK

### GLASGOW

### HASTINGS

### KENT

### LIVERPOOL

### LONDON:

### E LONDON

### HARINGEY

### NW LONDON

### SE LONDON

### SW LONDON


### MANCHESTER

### NEWCASTLE

### PRESTON & CHORLEY

### WALES

### WEST YORKSHIRE



You can join by scanning the QR code on the right and completing the form on our website or alternatively fill out your details here and hand it in at one of our stalls or post to Counterfire, UN1.30, United House, North Road, London, N7 9DP


FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

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# JOIN COUNTERFIRE TODAY

Scan the QR code or go to [www.counterfire.org/join](http://www.counterfire.org/join)

ART & CULTURE

# Suspect: A police 'execution'

SHABBIR LAKHA

A new four-episode series on Disney+ looks at the police operation that cut short the life of Jean Charles de Menezes as we approach the twentieth anniversary of his killing. It is a tense drama, disturbing to watch at times, but which brings to light the realities of police violence, racism and cover-up.

In the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings and then a botched attempt to repeat the attacks two weeks later, the Met Police launched a manhunt to find the four attempted-suicide bombers.

They activated a shoot-to-kill policy known as Operation Kratos. On 22 July 2025, Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian electrician, exited his block of flats which was under surveillance by the Met police who believed one of the four suspects resided there. Despite not positively identifying de Menezes as one of the suspects, they proceeded to pursue him into Stockwell tube station and onto a train, where he was then held down and shot 7 times in the head.



SCENE FROM SUSPECT

*Suspect* presents a thorough examination of the events, taking into account the pressure on the Met Police. It shows nonetheless that there was no justification for the killing of de Menezes in what his cousin described as an 'execution'.

Even less so for the attempted cover-up. Met Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair helped concoct a false media narrative which suggested de Menezes was acting suspiciously, wearing a 'bulky jacket', had jumped the barriers at the station and squared up to the armed officers who had identified themselves.

In actual fact, none of this was true. The facts were only revealed by a leak from the IPCC who were denied access to the crime scene for several days. The Met's priorities were clear though the family's justice campaign was spied on by an undercover officers.

At the inquest, the Met Police continued to lie and presented a composite photo comparing de Menezes with one of the suspects, Osman Hussein, which was revealed to be doctored to make them look more alike. The coroner did not let the jury return an 'unlawful killing' verdict, denying any possibility of justice.

The series doesn't focus on the link with Britain's wars in the Middle East and the Islamophobia it generated, but it is present. One of the attempted suicide-bombers remarks, "we call it jihad, they call it foreign policy". The officer who first suspected Jean Charles de Menezes said it was because he had "Mongolian eyes". The Operation Kratos tactics were developed with consultation from Israeli and Sri Lankan security forces. The SO19 firearms officers that killed de Menezes were reportedly trained by the SAS.

Cressida Dick who was Gold Commander of the operation was promoted to Deputy Assistant Commissioner and in 2017 to Commissioner. During her five years as head of the force, she ramped up Met Police use of racially-profiling stop-and-search and facial recognition and presided over the violent attack by officers at the Sarah Everard vigil in 2021.

Fast-forward to the present day, and we are meant to believe that the Met Police were lawful in killing Chris Kaba, or are the best adjudicators of racism when they harass and arrest Palestine protesters. A force with a consistent track record of racial profiling, killing, sexually harassing women; of lying, spying and covering up its actions; and of promoting through its ranks those responsible. *Suspect*, though engaging to watch, lays bare why this is nonsense that we must reject.

## SOLIDARITY WITH KNEECAP: RALLY ON 18 JUNE

DAVE RANDALL

*'This is political policing.  
This is a carnival of distraction.  
14,000 babies are about to die of starvation in Gaza, with food sent by the world sitting on the other side of a wall, and once again the British establishment is focused on us.'*

This was the sharp response from Irish hip-hop group Kneecap to news that their rapper Mo Chara (Liam Óg ó hAinídh) had been charged with a terror offence after allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag at a London gig.

The arrest and ensuing media frenzy is indeed being deployed as a weapon of mass distraction. It's classic 'culture wars' stuff: take the heat off a government and broader liberal establishment that has been complicit in genocide by forcing an issue of marginal significance to the top of the news agenda.

Even so, something else is also at play. Rulers recognise the political power of culture and will fight, often covertly, to quash dissent from the creative sector. This has been true throughout history and across cultures. From pharaohs to feudal



lords, muftis to maharajahs, republicans to royals, rulers always have a music policy.

All have given patronage to some musicians while suppressing the music of others. On Friday 23 May we got a glimpse of why this is the case. On

that day thousands of us chanted 'Free Palestine' in Whitehall at a rally for Gaza called by the Stop The War Coalition and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Just hours later 20,000 Kneecap fans repeated the same chant during the band's powerful set at the Wide Awake festival.

When the demands of the movement are amplified by high-profile musicians and taken up by their audiences, rulers know they're losing the battle for hearts and minds. Conversely, when musicians choose the wrong side of history, warmongers and apologists for genocide are emboldened.

On this issue, Radiohead and Nick Cave are among those who must be called to task. Not only have both ignored Palestinian calls for a cultural boycott of Israel but they have also attacked the Palestine solidarity movement. If they, and those who have so far remained silent, change their minds and belatedly join us, we should welcome them.

Most importantly, however, we must support, and where necessary defend, those who have consistently stood with Palestine. That's why I will join the rally in solidarity with Kneecap at their pre-trial hearing: Westminster Magistrates Court, 18 June, 9:30am.

**Dave Randall is a musician who has toured with Faithless, Dido, Sinéad O'Connor and others. An updated second edition of his book *Sound System: The Political Power of Music* will be published by Pluto Press in August**

# PALESTINE SOLIDARITY

## NOT A CRIME



**LUCY NICHOLS**

The Palestine solidarity movement in Britain proves the power of protest. The British government has been forced to change its position from its unrelenting support for Israel's genocidal project in Gaza since October 2023.

Foreign secretary David Lammy condemned Israel's actions in Gaza, which he called 'repellent' and 'monstrous'. Keir Starmer described the situation as 'intolerable' and even called for a ceasefire. A weak criticism but still a clear shift, especially compared to March this year, where he rejected any notion that Israel had violated international law.

The sheer scale of violence and destruction that Israel continues to unleash on Gaza is unimaginable. The genocide can be stopped if the West stops supplying Israel with arms and financial and political support.

The UK government's backtracking came a day after 600,000 people marched through central London demanding an end to the genocide and the liberation of

Palestine. The size and strength of the Palestine solidarity movement in Britain should not be understated. Partly as a result of it, public opinion has also long been on the side of Palestine. Today, 79% want a ceasefire in Gaza and only 4% are opposed to there being one.

We still, however, have work to do to turn words into action and stop our government facilitating genocide. And while on the back foot, the government remains adamant in attacking our movement and attempting to criminalise Palestine solidarity.

Kneecap rapper Mo Chara was charged with a terror offence the day after Lammy called for a ceasefire and announced a suspension of trade talks with Israel (which seem to have carried on regardless). The state's attack on Kneecap is an attempt to silence the group, which has been outspoken in its support for Palestine and criticism of Britain's role in the genocide.

Chris Nineham of the Stop the War Coalition and Ben Jamal of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign will still appear before Westminster Magistrates' Court on 7 and 8 July, after being charged with public-order

offences. The police are attempting to intimidate the Palestine movement by targeting its leadership in an unprecedented attack on the movement and our democratic rights.

The Filton 18 are still behind bars awaiting trial at the Old Bailey. Many of these eighteen Palestine Action activists have already been interrogated by counter-terrorism police or forced into solitary confinement, despite being charged for non-terror-related offences.

The Palestine movement in Britain is incredibly strong. Public opinion is on our side, the state is still intimidated by the size and breadth of our movement, and the government's position is starting to crumble. Now is the time to escalate to stop the flow of weapons and to defend the right to protest.

We have to ensure the next national demonstration on 21 June is massive. And we have to turn out in our numbers outside the court on 7 July to demand the charges against Chris and Ben are dropped. We must prove to the government and the police that the Palestine solidarity movement is not going anywhere.

**21 June: Palestine National demonstration**

12pm, Central London. Follow @stwuK for updates

**7 July: Rally to defend Chris Nineham and Ben Jamal**

9:30am, City of London Magistrates' Court, 1 Queen Victoria St, London EC4N 4XY

FREEZING