

Building a fighting left



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Scrap the two-child benefit cap: no more austerity



Apsana Begum MP

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Fourteen years of Tory austerity saw the number of children in poverty increase by almost three-quarters of a million over that period.

Low pay and cuts in public services have been imposed on our communities brutally, cruelly, and relentlessly.

We have a housing crisis where affordable housing is just not affordable. Where profit not people have driven development and regeneration has meant gentrification.

People are paying more and more and more for less and less and less. All while the rich get richer.

Not only did the Tories drive people into poverty, they then punished them for being poor. They persecuted people for being disabled and viciously attacked the vulnerable.

As they attacked the very fabric of our communities, they fostered fear and division and falsely pointed to migrants as the cause of the UK's woes.

Fourteen years of the Conservative's unjust reign of austerity, division and

repression have come to an end.

People voted for change, and they are looking to Parliament – to a Labour Government – to deliver.

The King's Speech's measures on transforming the UK for the better – measures relating to investment, public ownership, and employment rights – are an exciting opportunity.

However, after years of austerity, there are widespread concerns regarding the funding needed and questions about priorities, political choices and in whose interests decisions are made.

Whether children in poverty have to pay the price with their wellbeing or whether the rich and wealthy simply pay their fair share? Whether a child has a fair future, or a millionaire has an extra yacht? Whether our society is about creating a hopeful future for our children or whether it is driven by profit creation for corporations?

Deciding what sort of society we want – what our values are – that was central to the General Election.

The two-child limit in particular was an appalling attack on our communities. Anti-poverty charities, think tanks and academic researchers have long been highlighting the harm it causes.

All evidence shows that the two-child cap on benefits has contributed to rising and deepening levels of child poverty, and

food insecurity for larger families.

That is why I am calling for the scrapping the two-child limit. It is a straightforward act that could lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty and send out a positive message of hope.

Because what is more important than our children and our future?

Austerity has devastated our communities, leading to spiralling poverty and inequality. Scrapping the two-child benefit limit - a keynote austerity policy - needs to be accompanied by a new approach to economic policy based on investment not cuts, ending austerity for good.

Stand with the seven MPs who voted to tackle child poverty

"Dear Keir Starmer: We oppose your decision to suspend 7 MPs from the Labour Whip for voting for scrapping the two-child benefit cap - a move which would immediately lift 300,000 children out of poverty. This shameful decision must be reversed."

Add your name to the statement:
<https://bit.ly/standwiththe7>

Real change means ending austerity



**Sarah Woolley, BFAWU
General Secretary**

We're at a pivotal moment for workers' rights: after fourteen years of austerity and rights being systematically stripped back, we have an opportunity for change.

The election and aftermath shows the fight for justice and fairness is far from over – there's an urgent need for political and economic transformation, ending austerity for good.

The Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union recently conducted a comprehensive survey to understand our members' priorities. The results highlight how our members are politically engaged and determined to see change. They're not content with the status quo, and the issues they face reflect broader societal challenges.

Our survey shaped the Bakers' Dozen manifesto of 13 demands. These aren't just aspirations – they're essential changes to improve lives:



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- £15 an Hour Minimum Wage.
- Abolish Zero-Hour Contracts.
- Full Employment Rights from Day One.
- Contractual Sick Pay at 100%
- Repeal Anti-Union Legislation.
- Maximum Workplace Temperature.
- Accountability for Company Failures.
- Public Ownership of Utilities.
- Right to Food.
- Affordable Public Transport.
- End Arms Sales to Israel.
- Abolish Tuition Fees.

- Create a National Care Service.

Our collective strength and solidarity are our greatest assets. We must continue to organise, educate and mobilise to hold those in power accountable: just because they are now the Labour Party it doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels.

We must send a clear message that we won't accept empty promises or half-measures. We demand real change - and won't rest until we see it.

• **Read the 'Bakers Dozen' demands in full at www.bfawu.org**

• **Sarah Woolley is the General Secretary of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union.**

Stand with Latin America's Left



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Latin America's Left continues to show a better world is possible. Although defeats for the Left often get more press attention, progressive governments have been elected in countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Honduras in recent years.

I was privileged to go to a Workers' Party Congress in Brazil prior to Lula returning to the Presidency, seeing for myself how massive social movements can both resist a right-wing government and

provide a basis for democracy and social progress to advance.

Our comrades elsewhere are also getting on with the business of building a better society.

Honduras has given free electricity to the poor and clamped town on corporate tax avoidance.

Bolivia has made the right to food a reality through the Bonus Against Hunger initiative, which helped over four million



**Jess Barnard,
Labour NEC member**

people, partly funded through a wealth tax.

And earlier this year in Mexico - where fire-and-rehire has been banned and outsourcing of public services ended – victory was spectacular. Claudia Sheinbaum – successor to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador – won the election by over 32 points!

The lesson here is that rolling back neo-liberalism not only works, it wins for the Left too!

Yet – as has happened time and time again - the US Empire is striking back.

As well as blockading Cuba, it has enforced heavy sanctions on Venezuela, in a bid to force 'regime change' in the oil-rich country. These efforts have rightly been opposed by the aforementioned progressive governments.

We must both offer solidarity against these reactionary attacks and take inspiration from how people are fighting back through mass movements against neo-liberalism and US-domination.



Stand with Palestine

Louise Regan, Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Over 40,000 Palestinians have now been killed in Israel's war – two-thirds of them women and children. Since October 7th at least 16,314 children have been killed in Israel's war on Gaza. In March 2024 UNRWA reported that more children had been killed in Gaza in four months than in four years of war world-wide and thousands more have been killed since. Ten children a day face an amputation with no anaesthetic and at least 3000 children have had at least one limb amputated.

Israel has been ordered by the International Court of Justice to take action to prevent a genocide occurring, whilst the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, has said there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met.

The supposed 'safe zones' are facing repeated attacks and evacuation orders are forcing already displaced civilians into increasingly overcrowded and uninhabitable shelters.

Over the last few weeks schools, refugee camps, and a busy market have all been considered legitimate targets for Israel's unrelenting war machine. Palestinians are facing bombardment from the air,

shooting from the sea, and shelling on the ground with images of burned and decapitated children becoming a regular occurrence on our social media feeds.

Nine of every ten schools in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. More than eight in ten of them will need full or major work to be functional again. All universities have been destroyed.

More than 625,000 students have had no access to education since October. They have witnessed horrific and terrifying events, and the trauma they have suffered will take years if not decades to overcome.

And now, the people of Gaza are on the brink of another crisis. Polio has returned for the first time in 25 years, posing an unimaginable threat to all of Gaza's children of paralysis and death. Its outbreak in Gaza is a direct result of Israel's destruction of Gaza's health and sanitation infrastructure. Agencies and medical professionals from around the world, including Save the Children, have called for an immediate ceasefire to allow for the vaccination of Gaza's children, and yet still Israel's bombing continues.

Right now every ounce of our energy and effort is focused on calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the ending of weapon sales to Israel and immediate aid to be allowed in to Gaza.

But we know that history did not begin on October 7th. This genocide is built on the foundations of more than 76 years



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of colonisation, military occupation and apartheid.

Right now Palestinians are standing in the dark but we know that they will rise again as they have always done.

Our task has to be to stand with them, to escalate our actions, to keep speaking out so that we can help them to finally make this stop.

We know Palestinians tell us that they don't need our tears, they need our voices as theirs are silenced - but they need more than our words, they need our actions too.

We must not stop until there is a permanent ceasefire. Until the genocide is ended. Until all the walls of apartheid are dismantled. And until the day when Palestinians are finally free.

• **Louise Regan is Chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC).**

• **You can become a member of PSC via www.palestinecampaign.org/join**



Stop the far-right: defend refugees and stand up to racism



Diane Abbott MP

The racist violence that exploded this summer shed an unforgiving light on the long-standing anti-immigrant narrative - which has been constant, angry and almost fact-free.

The obvious point is that for decades, those commonly described in the media as “immigrants” hadn’t emigrated from anywhere. They were British citizens who happened to be non-white, but for years “immigrant” was a commonly accepted euphemism in politics for black or South Asian.

Additionally, politicians began to talk about “illegal” immigrants. But many described like that were asylum seekers, and there’s no such thing as an “illegal” asylum seeker.

With this dehumanising coverage, it shouldn’t have been a surprise for politicians and the media when the racist violence erupted – but it was.

The media responded in different ways. The ‘Guardian’ covered the violence in a reasonably balanced way. The ‘Telegraph’ couldn’t bring itself to recant its consistently anti-immigrant coverage. So, despite the reality that most of the racist violence was white, it managed to design a front page which made it look like Asian and white violence were evenly balanced.

But the ‘Daily Mail’ was the most remarkable. This is a paper which has featured headlines like “Migrants: How many more can we take?” but in the days after the violence, it read like it had been taken over by an anti-racist collective. A front page had a picture of

demonstrators with the headline “Night anti-hate marchers faced down the thugs.” It may have been only temporary, but for a few days they had to swallow their anti-immigrant propaganda.

The media has played a key role in whipping up hatred and fear. But ultimately, migration is a political question, and politicians bear much responsibility for the climate in which the racist violence occurred. Remarkably, some right-wing politicians like Suella Braverman, who had been most vehemently anti-immigrant, fell silent.

Others paid lip service to the undesirability of attacking mosques, or trying to set fire to hotels full of asylum seekers. But they quickly pivoted to talking about a “culture of silence” on the effects of immigration, and straightforward anti-Muslim rhetoric. One Conservative politician said any Muslim shouting “Allahu Akbar” should be arrested. The phrase is the equivalent of a Christian shouting Hallelujah. It’s pure Islamophobia to suggest a Muslim saying a similar phrase should be put in the hands of the police.

But Labour politicians’ responses were the most interesting.

From the beginning, you didn’t have to be a political scientist to understand the violence was racist. It was targeted at mosques rather than churches, at non-white Britons rather than whites, and rioters shouted racist slogans. But, in initial statements, Keir Starmer didn’t mention racism and Islamophobia – instead, speaking about “thuggery”.

The Government flatly refused to talk about the intrinsically racist and Islamophobic nature of the violence. It is entirely clear why not. It may be these are subjects they would rather not talk about. But it may also be down to the fact that in a number of constituencies won by Labour, the far-right, nakedly anti-immigrant Reform Party came second. It may then have been a worry for them that if they called out the racist nature of the violence, some candidates in marginals risk losing votes to Reform in the next election.

Politicians of all parties have been talking about the need to look at the causation of the violence. It’s true many of the communities where the racist violence occurred are economically marginalised. But the fundamental cause for the violence was racism. Sadly, not acknowledging this openly, doesn’t make racist violence less likely to recur.

The way forward is clear. Stop the far-right, defend refugees and don’t give an inch to racism.

Sign the unity statement: Stop the Far Right

Join hundreds of politicians, music artists, campaigners, trade unionists and anti-racists in signing Stand Up To Racism’s unity statement: <https://bit.ly/unity-statement>