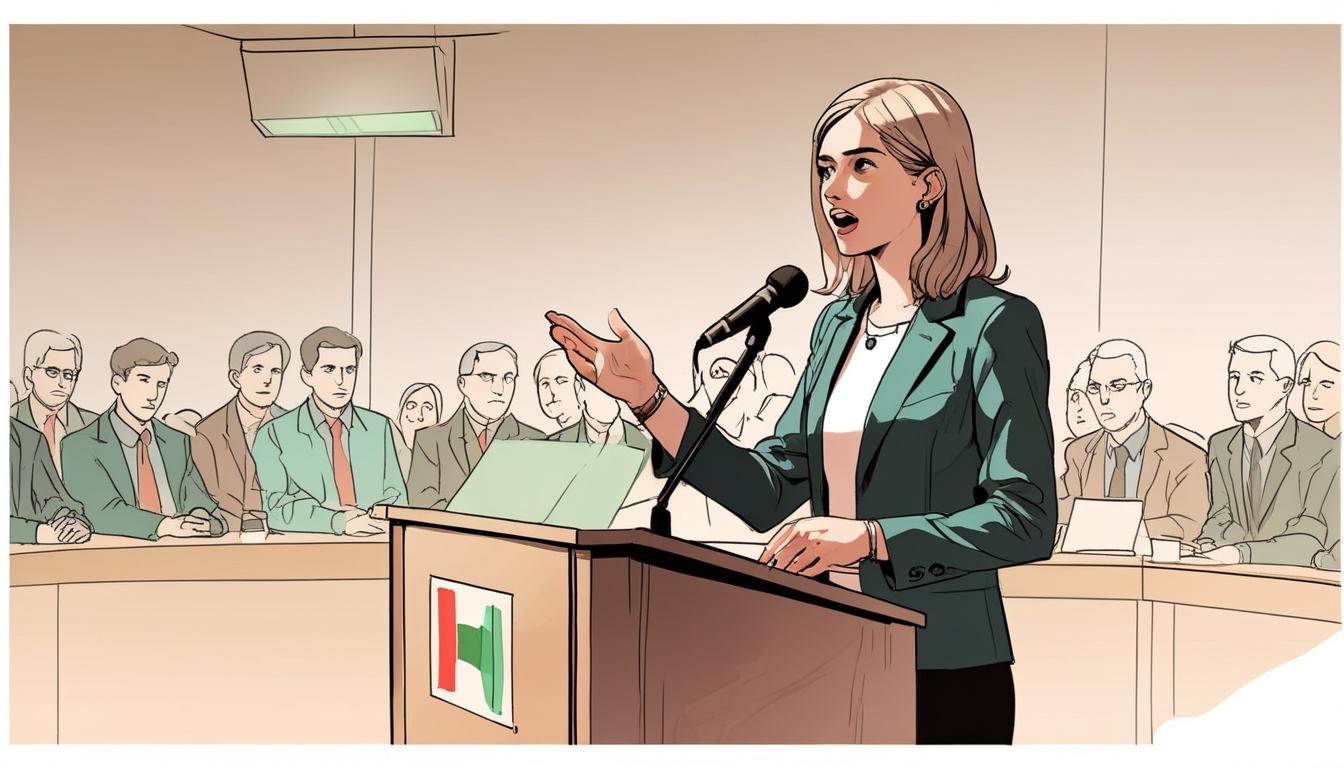
# Pro-Palestinian independents shake up Labour dominance in Lancashire local elections



In the recent local elections held across England, pro-Palestinian campaigners have made significant inroads into Labour's voter base, leading to a notable reshaping of various council seats. These elections, taking place on a Thursday in May, saw a series of candidates elected under independent banners, reflecting a continuation of trends from the previous general elections last July, when independents found success in traditionally Labour-dominated areas.

In Lancashire County Council, several independents have emerged victorious, notably Maheen Kamran, who won the Burnley Central East division at just 18 years old. Kamran cited the ongoing Gaza crisis as her motivation for entering politics, stating that she wishes to enhance public spaces by implementing measures to reduce what she terms "free mixing" between men and women. In her victory, she secured 38 per cent of the vote, positioning herself ahead of both the Reform Party candidate and Labour's own candidate, who fell to third place. This shift contrasts starkly with the previous elections in 2021, where Labour candidates commanded a majority.

Joining Kamran in the council is Usman Arif, who also won a seat in Burnley North East. Arif had previously been affiliated with Labour but resigned in November 2023, discontented with the party's position on the Middle East. He routinely shares his views on the Gaza conflict via social media platforms, further illustrating the political sentiments influencing local elections.

Another significant victory for the independent slate was Azhar Ali, who reclaimed his seat in the Nelson East division. Ali garnered nearly 50 per cent of the vote, maintaining a position he previously held as a Labour candidate for eight years. His journey has been marked by controversy; he was expelled from the Labour party over accusations of anti-Semitism following remarks he made about the Israeli conflict. Ali had aspired to represent Labour in a parliamentary by-election last year but faced suspension due to his comments regarding Israel and the actions surrounding Hamas.

With these changes, the Reform UK party is set to assume control of Lancashire County Council, having won more than the 43 seats required for a majority. This marks a significant transition from the Conservative leadership previously in place.

In light of the results, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer addressed the media during a visit to Bedfordshire, expressing the party's awareness of its electoral challenges. He noted, “What I want to say is, my response is we get it. We were elected last year to bring about change.” Starmer outlined Labour's commitment to addressing key issues, including reducing NHS waiting lists, indicating a desire to accelerate needed transformations within the party and the wider political landscape.

These election outcomes highlight a notable shift in public sentiment and voter priorities, especially concerning the political implications of the Gaza crisis, as candidates rally around these issues to capture the electorate's focus.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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