# Jeremy Corbyn condemns Starmer’s ‘island of strangers’ immigration rhetoric at Wide Awake Festival



Jeremy Corbyn, speaking at the Wide Awake Festival in London, has publicly condemned Sir Keir Starmer's recent immigration rhetoric, specifically the phrase “island of strangers” used in a significant policy announcement. This remark has drawn parallels to inflammatory historical speeches, notably Enoch Powell's notorious “rivers of blood” address delivered in 1968, where he warned that white Britons might become “strangers in their own country.” Corbyn insisted that such language detracts from the UK's true identity, which he believes is rooted in its rich diversity and myriad backgrounds. “Our community, our strength, our joy, our lives, our hope is our diversity,” he stated emphatically, asserting that this essence makes places like London unique.

Starmer's immigration proposals have sparked criticism not only from Corbyn but also from various political factions. While right-wing commentators argue that his policies inadequately tackle illegal immigration, liberal voices express concern over their inflammatory nature and potential negative impact on social cohesion. Key sectors, including universities and the care industry, lament the severe tightening of visa controls and fear that such measures could lead to labour shortages. As public sentiment shifts, with polls indicating declining support for immigration's perceived benefits, Starmer seems to be attempting to address pressing concerns over migration's impact on social services and integration.

Corbyn seized the opportunity at the festival to voice broader criticisms, including a call to end British arms sales to Israel. He urged attendees to take part in anti-war demonstrations, framing Britain's military trade as complicit in the suffering of Palestinians. He stated, “Britain has supplied weapons and parts for the F-35 jets that are used to bomb Gaza,” emphasising the moral imperative to support those facing dire situations.

In a pointed critique of the Labour leadership's current trajectory, Corbyn suggested that taxation policies should target the wealthy to finance public services. “You can’t achieve equality and justice if you extol the virtues of billionaires and do nothing about taking money off them to pay for decent services for the many,” he remarked, suggesting that progressive taxation could be a path towards a more equitable society.

The festival also featured performances from a range of artists, including the Irish rap trio Kneecap, who have recently found themselves embroiled in controversy following a charge against one of their members for displaying a Hezbollah flag. This incident highlights the tensions and complexities surrounding free speech and artistic expression in today's politically charged climate.

Adding another layer to the festival's backdrop, the ongoing use of Brockwell Park for large events has met with local opposition. Residents have raised concerns over damage to the park and the disruption caused by the festivals, resulting in a High Court ruling that Lambeth Council acted “irrationally” in permitting them. Nevertheless, the council has pressed ahead with new planning applications, suggesting a contentious future for events in the area.

In an increasingly polarised political environment, Corbyn's impassioned remarks at the Wide Awake Festival serve as a counter-narrative to the Labour leadership's current policies, calling into question the party's commitment to diversity, social justice, and humanitarian concerns. As the political landscape evolves, the implications of these debates will undoubtedly resonate through the upcoming electoral cycles.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3daf7366-fe7f-4b6b-9e23-652499082b34), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/d83661777617aae46a5cb6942f544e54), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/55bcac8b-6430-4040-b005-6cc24325dc71)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/political-cowardice-jeremy-corbyn-hits-out-at-labour-position-on-migrant-barges-12935421)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[7]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1699955/jeremy-corbyn-keir-starmer-immigration-labour-cbi-conference)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/> - Jeremy Corbyn criticized Sir Keir Starmer's use of the phrase 'island of strangers' in an immigration announcement. Speaking at the Wide Awake Festival in London, Corbyn emphasized the UK's strength lies in its diversity and different backgrounds, contrasting Starmer's remarks with Enoch Powell's 1968 'rivers of blood' speech. Corbyn also called for an end to British arms sales to Israel and suggested higher taxes on the wealthy to fund public services. Additionally, he addressed the controversy surrounding the Irish rap group Kneecap, whose member faced a terror charge over displaying a Hezbollah flag.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/3daf7366-fe7f-4b6b-9e23-652499082b34> - Keir Starmer's proposed immigration policy has faced criticism from both ends of the political spectrum. Right-wing commentators argue it doesn't address illegal immigration via small boats, while liberals find the language inflammatory and the measures damaging. Key sectors like universities and social care lament the tighter visa controls. Despite these challenges, Starmer seeks to address public concerns over immigration's impact on services and integration, with polling data showing declining support for immigration's economic and social benefits.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/d83661777617aae46a5cb6942f544e54> - UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a new initiative to significantly reduce immigration numbers and make it more difficult to settle in the country, in response to increasing public concern and the electoral rise of the anti-immigrant Reform UK party. Speaking in Downing Street, Starmer pledged to tighten all areas of the immigration system—work, family, and study—emphasizing a controlled, selective, and fair approach. These measures include raising salary thresholds and English language requirements for employment visas, ending overseas recruitment for care home jobs, and requiring 10 years of residency for citizenship.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/55bcac8b-6430-4040-b005-6cc24325dc71> - UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has introduced stringent immigration reforms, sparking significant backlash from businesses, the care sector, and universities. The new policies extend the settlement period for migrants to ten years unless they show significant contributions to the UK and eliminate visa options for lower-skilled roles, including for social care workers. International students will also face stricter post-study residency rules and universities must pay a 6% levy on international student fees. Starmer positions the reforms as a corrective to what he describes as the previous Conservative government’s uncontrolled immigration policy.
6. <https://news.sky.com/story/political-cowardice-jeremy-corbyn-hits-out-at-labour-position-on-migrant-barges-12935421> - Jeremy Corbyn has accused Sir Keir Starmer of 'political cowardice' after the party said it would continue to temporarily house asylum seekers on barges if it wins the next election. The former Labour leader described the use of vessels as 'morally indefensible'. It comes as the first asylum seekers arrived on the controversial Bibby Stockholm vessel in Dorset this morning, with more arrivals expected throughout the day. The barge is one of a number of alternative sites the Home Office is using to end reliance on expensive hotels for asylum seekers, which the government says is costing the taxpayer £6m a day.
7. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1699955/jeremy-corbyn-keir-starmer-immigration-labour-cbi-conference> - Jeremy Corbyn has hit out at Sir Keir Starmer as a row over Labour's immigration policy erupted. The former Labour leader took to Twitter this morning after Sir Keir told the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) conference that businesses had to wean themselves off reliance on cheap labour from overseas. Mr Corbyn, who now sits as an independent MP, said: 'Without immigration, the trains wouldn’t run, businesses wouldn’t function and the NHS wouldn’t exist.'