# Jeremy Corbyn condemns Keir Starmer's 'island of strangers' immigration remarks



Jeremy Corbyn has delivered a forthright critique of Sir Keir Starmer's recent remarks regarding immigration, particularly the phrase “island of strangers” used during a significant policy announcement. Speaking at the Wide Awake Festival in Brockwell Park, south London, Corbyn, the former Labour leader and now an independent MP, urged a reconsideration of the narrative surrounding immigration. He stated, “Let’s hear no more of this nonsense spoken by some about this being a country of strangers,” reflecting on the alarming historical echoes of Enoch Powell’s controversial rhetoric from the 1960s. Corbyn framed the nation’s diversity as a source of strength, joy, and hope, reinforcing his belief in community cohesion.

Starmer's comments come amid the broader context of his government’s stringent reforms on immigration, which have elicited significant backlash from various sectors, including businesses and educational institutions. His proposals extend the settlement period for migrants and eliminate visa options for lower-skilled roles, a move that critics argue will exacerbate existing labour shortages in essential services, particularly healthcare and social care. According to reports, these reforms could reduce net migration significantly, yet many economists contend that high migration levels have actually bolstered economic growth, challenging Starmer’s assertions.

Corbyn’s critique extends beyond immigration policy to address broader socio-economic disparities. He called for the government to rethink its stance on taxation for the wealthy, arguing that genuine equality and justice require systemic change rather than continued support for billionaire interests. He remarked, “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 the decent services for the many.” This sentiment reflects a growing frustration within parts of the Labour Party regarding their current leadership’s direction, particularly its perceived shift towards right-leaning rhetoric.

Additionally, Corbyn's stance on military support for Israel has been uncompromising. He has voiced strong opposition to the UK’s arms sales to Israel, particularly in light of the ongoing crisis in Gaza, linking military supply to moral obligations under international law. This issue resonates not only with activists but also with a significant faction of the British public, many of whom support a more critical approach to the UK’s foreign policy in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

At the same festival, disparate voices emerged, including performances from artists like the Irish rap trio Kneecap, further highlighting the multifaceted nature of contemporary political discourse among youth and activists. However, local residents have also expressed dissatisfaction over the disruption caused by such events, successfully challenging Lambeth Council in court over planning procedures. This illustrates the ongoing tension between community engagement and governance, exacerbated by the intense scrutiny and critique of public resources and spaces.

In this complex political landscape, Corbyn’s calls for solidarity and actionable change resonate with a significant, albeit fragmented, constituency within the UK. As migration and integration policies continue to dominate political debate, the need for a coherent and inclusive narrative becomes ever more pressing within British society.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[4]](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-815313)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/55bcac8b-6430-4040-b005-6cc24325dc71), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoring_control_over_the_immigration_system)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://news.sky.com/story/political-cowardice-jeremy-corbyn-hits-out-at-labour-position-on-migrant-barges-12935421), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-keir-starmer-immigration-b2594332.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-815313), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-keir-starmer-immigration-b2594332.html), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/17/keir-starmer-suspend-arms-sales-israel-kings-speech-amendment)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/55bcac8b-6430-4040-b005-6cc24325dc71), [[3]](https://news.sky.com/story/political-cowardice-jeremy-corbyn-hits-out-at-labour-position-on-migrant-barges-12935421)

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

## 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.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. Critics argue the measures will exacerbate labor shortages and strain critical sectors. The government estimates these reforms could reduce net migration by 98,000 annually, bringing it to around 240,000 by 2029-2030. However, economists contend that high migration has not hampered growth, contrary to Starmer’s assertions. The policy shift has also drawn condemnation from within the Labour Party for adopting right-leaning rhetoric and undermining economic stability.
3. <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.
4. <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-815313> - British Independent MP Jeremy Corbyn sharply condemned the UK’s continued supply of weapons to Israel in a post on X on Monday. He questioned why, given Britain is signed up to the ICC, the UK continued to supply weapons to Israel. He asked the UK to 'abide by international law.' The BBC announced earlier in August that Corbyn is in talks with four other independent MPs to form a new pro-Palestine group, which would increase their sway in Parliament. The MPs are Shockat Adam, Ayoub Khan, Adnan Hussain, and Iqbal Mohamed, all of whom platformed their support for Palestinians as an integral part of their campaign.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-keir-starmer-immigration-b2594332.html> - Former Tory leader Boris Johnson has launched an attack on current prime minister Keir Starmer over immigration. The former PM accused Sir Keir of giving 'the clear impression of a man who has no plan to stop illegal immigration, because he simply doesn't care'. His comments come after Sir Keir attacked former PM Rishi Sunak’s approach to the small boats crisis as 'gimmicks, not serious government' and established the party’s own plans to clamp down on people smugglers back in May.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoring_control_over_the_immigration_system> - In May 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer introduced a white paper titled 'Restoring Control Over the Immigration System'. In his speech, Starmer pledged to 'take back control of our borders and close the book on a squalid chapter for our politics, our economy, and our country.' He described the previous Conservative Party government's immigration policies as 'chaos' and 'a one-nation experiment in open borders,' stating that net migration into the UK quadrupled between 2019 and 2023, despite Conservative Party pledges to reduce immigration. Starmer highlighted that he was moving to reduce immigration because he personally believed it was the right thing to do and not because of party politics. He continued by stating that 'nations depend on rules... Without them, we risk becoming an island of strangers, not a nation that walks forward together,' saying that the UK's immigration system 'seems almost designed to permit abuse' and was 'contributing to the forces that are slowly pulling our country apart.'
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/17/keir-starmer-suspend-arms-sales-israel-kings-speech-amendment> - In July 2024, Labour MP Zarah Sultana called for the UK government to suspend arms sales to Israel, urging colleagues to uphold international law and end Britain's complicity in the killing. She emphasized that if the new government intends to turn a new leaf, the first step should be banning arms sales to Israel—a move backed by 56% of the public. Sultana challenged the Conservative government's complicity in crimes against the Palestinian people and urged the Labour government to take a stand against the far-right.