# Jeremy Corbyn condemns Starmer’s ‘island of strangers’ remarks and calls for arms embargo on Israel



At the Wide Awake Festival in Brockwell Park, south London, Jeremy Corbyn delivered a passionate critique of Sir Keir Starmer's remarks regarding immigration, specifically his characterisation of the UK as an “island of strangers.” Corbyn, the former Labour leader and now an independent MP, expressed his concerns that such language echoes the divisive rhetoric of historical figures like Enoch Powell. “Let’s hear no more of this nonsense spoken by some about this being a country of strangers,” he declared, emphasising that the true strength of the nation lies in its diversity. Corbyn's remarks resonate deeply in the current socio-political climate, where immigration remains a polarising issue.

Starmer, who succeeded Corbyn as Labour leader, suggested that failure to address immigration and integration risks turning the UK into that “island of strangers,” invoking sentiments similar to those expressed in Powell's infamous “rivers of blood” speech from 1968. Powell’s address, which warned of social discord should immigration levels rise, left a lasting scar on British political discourse. Critics argue that Starmer's use of Powell-like rhetoric could be seen as a retreat from the progressive values that Labour traditionally stands for, a sentiment shared among many within the party’s left faction, who advocate for a more inclusive narrative on immigration.

Corbyn, during his address, did not limit his critiques to immigration policy. He also called for an end to British arms sales to Israel, particularly highlighting the role of UK-supplied F-35 jets in the ongoing conflict in Gaza. “This country, Britain, has supplied weapons and parts for the F-35 jets that are used to bomb Gaza,” he stated, rallying festival-goers to join anti-war demonstrations in support of the Palestinian people. His comments reflect a broader movement within UK politics that sees increasing calls for a comprehensive reassessment of arms sales to Israel, especially in light of escalating violence in the region.

Recent developments suggest that the UK government is beginning to respond to these pressures; it has decided to halt the export of certain military equipment to Israel, citing concerns over their potential use in violating humanitarian laws. While this decision affects only a small fraction of the UK's substantial arms export licences, it signals a readjustment in policy that could align with escalating calls from critics, including Labour MPs like Zarah Sultana, who advocate for a complete arms embargo.

Additionally, Corbyn's advocacy for social equity extended to economic matters, where he proposed progressive tax reforms aimed at the wealthy to better fund public services. This aligns with ongoing debates within the Labour party regarding economic justice and the redistribution of wealth, contrasting sharply with Starmer’s more centrist, business-friendly stance. “You can’t achieve equality and justice if you extol the virtues of billionaires and do nothing about taking money off them,” Corbyn argued, pushing for a discourse that challenges the traditional capitalist orthodoxy embraced by some of his former colleagues.

The festival, while a platform for political discourse, is not without its local controversies. Prominent concerns have been raised by residents about the impact of such events on Brockwell Park, with legal challenges against Lambeth Council over their management of the park space. Despite a High Court ruling against the council for allegedly bypassing planning processes, these music festivals continue, illustrating the friction between community interests and celebratory public events.

In this vibrant yet contentious atmosphere, Jeremy Corbyn's speeches resonate as a rallying cry for many who feel disillusioned by mainstream politics. His commitment to diversity, anti-war activism, and economic justice positions him distinctly apart from the current Labour leadership, signalling a broader ideological struggle within the party as it navigates its identity in contemporary British politics.

## 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 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/17/keir-starmer-suspend-arms-sales-israel-kings-speech-amendment), [[5]](https://www.newarab.com/news/uk-mps-call-israel-arms-embargo-demo-outside-parliament)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/09/02/monday-evening-news-briefing-britain-to-stop-exporting-some/), [[6]](https://www.thejc.com/news/jeremy-corbyn-calls-for-review-of-arms-sales-to-israel-amid-gaza-violence-tyn08iph)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/01/02/sir-keir-starmer-to-distance-himself-jeremy-corbyn-labour/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-criticises-starmers-island-of-strangers-speech-at-festival-NSL3XCAUPFMF5JJYD2OMDV5DPQ/), [[5]](https://www.newarab.com/news/uk-mps-call-israel-arms-embargo-demo-outside-parliament)

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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, highlighting the use of UK-supplied F-35 jets in Gaza. Additionally, he suggested increasing taxes on the wealthy to fund public services and addressed local concerns about the impact of festivals on Brockwell Park.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/17/keir-starmer-suspend-arms-sales-israel-kings-speech-amendment> - Labour MP Zarah Sultana urges the UK government to suspend arms sales to Israel, citing the use of British-made F-35 fighter jets in Gaza. She emphasizes the UK's legal obligation to prevent and punish genocide, referencing the International Court of Justice's ruling on Gaza. Sultana proposes four measures: imposing sanctions on Israeli cabinet members, enacting a full embargo on British weapons used in Gaza, sanctioning products from Israeli West Bank settlers, and formally recognizing a future Palestinian state. She calls for concrete actions beyond verbal disapproval to uphold international law.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/09/02/monday-evening-news-briefing-britain-to-stop-exporting-some/> - The UK government has decided to halt the export of certain military equipment to Israel after determining a risk of their use in violation of humanitarian law in Gaza. Approximately 30 out of 350 export licenses are affected. This decision aligns with the strategic export licensing criteria, which prohibits exports if there's a risk of facilitating serious violations of international humanitarian law. The move follows increasing calls for the UK to reassess its arms sales to Israel amid ongoing violence in Gaza.
5. <https://www.newarab.com/news/uk-mps-call-israel-arms-embargo-demo-outside-parliament> - A group of UK MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, demonstrated outside Parliament, urging Britain to halt arms sales to Israel amid ongoing violence in Gaza. The protest, organized with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, specifically called for stopping the sale of F-35 combat aircraft parts, which have been used by Israel in Gaza. Activists criticized the UK's decision to suspend only 30 out of 350 arms export licenses, arguing it leaves Israel with substantial weaponry for its military operations in Gaza.
6. <https://www.thejc.com/news/jeremy-corbyn-calls-for-review-of-arms-sales-to-israel-amid-gaza-violence-tyn08iph> - Jeremy Corbyn has called for Britain to consider halting arms sales to Israel following clashes on the Gaza border that resulted in Palestinian casualties. In a message read at a demonstration outside Downing Street, Corbyn condemned the violence as an 'outrage' and criticized Western 'silence' over the deaths. He emphasized the need for the UK to uphold international law and reassess its role in the conflict, highlighting the importance of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/01/02/sir-keir-starmer-to-distance-himself-jeremy-corbyn-labour/> - Sir Keir Starmer plans to further distance himself from his predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn, in an upcoming speech. He aims to present his premiership as focused on practical solutions rather than 'vanity dressed up as virtue.' Starmer criticizes both former Conservative leaders and Corbyn, emphasizing that politics should be about making a tangible difference in people's lives. He also highlights the need to 'clean up politics' by addressing issues like cronyism and restoring standards in public life.