# Jeremy Corbyn warns Keir Starmer’s immigration rhetoric risks fracturing UK unity



Jeremy Corbyn's recent criticisms of Sir Keir Starmer’s immigration rhetoric at the Wide Awake Festival underscore a critical divide within the Labour Party, emphasizing a need for urgent reevaluation of the current government’s stances. Starmer’s use of the phrase “island of strangers” during a major speech on immigration policy reflects a worrying trend towards divisive language that betrays the values of unity and integration. While Corbyn attempts to frame diversity as the nation’s strength, it is the very approach of this new government that threatens to fracture the UK’s social fabric.

Rather than fostering a conversation about inclusive policies, Starmer’s focus on tightening immigration controls—such as increasingly stringent language requirements and elongated citizenship processes—opens the door to further alienation and division within our communities. These moves not only play to the fears of a sector grappling with labour shortages but risk solidifying a brand of politics that prioritizes exclusion over the communal benefits of a diverse society.

While some within Labour, like MP Sarah Owen and London Mayor Sadiq Khan, have recognized the dangers of this rhetoric, they remain ensnared in a party that is moving dangerously close to echoing outdated and harmful narratives about immigration. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper’s defense of Starmer, claiming a balance between fair immigration and diversity, does little to assuage concerns among those who see this as a retreat from compassionate governance.

Corbyn’s focus extended beyond immigration, addressing the UK’s problematic arms sales to Israel, which he argues implicate Britain in escalating global conflicts. Calling for greater public engagement in anti-war movements, he challenged the government’s moral compass, noting Britain’s role in supplying military equipment used in devastating actions against civilian populations in Gaza. This stance aligns with a growing public sentiment fed up with government complicity in international crises—sentiment that is markedly absent in current political discussions.

With rising calls from figures like Zarah Sultana for a complete embargo on arms sales to Israel—especially given that a significant majority of the British public supports such measures—the Labour government appears increasingly out of step with the electorate. Corbyn’s assertions for reassessment of the UK’s military involvement highlight a pressing need for change in foreign policy that prioritizes ethical standards over political alliances.

As Corbyn’s critiques resonate with citizens disillusioned by the government's trajectory, the backdrop of the Wide Awake Festival illustrates the mounting tensions between community rights and cultural events, reflecting the broader upheaval within UK society. Legal challenges against the council’s decisions regarding festival permissions echo a growing discontent with how government actions impact local communities.

Amidst the shifting political landscape, the need for inclusive and responsible governance has never been more critical. The current Labour government must recognize that uniting rather than dividing on key issues such as immigration and foreign policy is essential for fostering a cohesive and inclusive national identity. As the UK navigates its multicultural future, it is imperative that leaders abandon rhetoric that risks splintering society further.

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/f9b2cf94-a4f0-4d32-94f2-5fe274f764b2> - In May 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivered a speech on immigration, warning that the UK risked becoming an 'island of strangers' without stricter controls. This remark drew comparisons to Enoch Powell's 1968 'rivers of blood' speech. Downing Street rejected these parallels, emphasizing Starmer's support for migrants and the need for a fair immigration system. Critics within the Labour Party, including MP Sarah Owen and London Mayor Sadiq Khan, expressed concern over Starmer’s language, warning it could foster division. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper defended Starmer, asserting his messaging supports diversity and control simultaneously. Planned policy changes include stricter English language requirements, extended citizenship application periods, and higher skill thresholds for foreign workers—excluding key sectors facing shortages.
3. <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-815313> - In August 2024, British Independent MP Jeremy Corbyn condemned the UK's continued supply of weapons to Israel, questioning the UK's adherence to international law. He highlighted the International Court of Justice's judgment labeling Israel's actions as genocidal against Palestinians and criticized the UK's ongoing arms sales to Israel. Corbyn emphasized the need for the UK to 'abide by international law' and suggested reconfiguring diplomatic relations with Israel due to the arrest warrant against its prime minister. He also mentioned discussions with other independent MPs to form a pro-Palestine group to increase their influence in Parliament.
4. <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 support Palestinians. She highlighted the use of British-made F-35 fighter jets in Gaza and the UK's role in supplying weapons to Israel. Sultana emphasized the need for the new government to stop enabling Israeli war crimes and proposed an amendment to the King's Speech calling for the suspension of arms sales to Israel. She noted that 56% of the public supported ending arms sales to Israel during the Gaza conflict, reflecting a significant public sentiment against such sales.
5. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Jeremy-Corbyn-calls-for-review-of-arms-sales-to-Israel-over-Gaza-clashes-549231> - In April 2018, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn called for a review of arms sales to Israel, condemning its 'illegal and inhumane' actions against Palestinians protesting on the Gaza border. He emphasized the right of Palestinians to protest against their conditions and the ongoing blockade and occupation. Corbyn criticized the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians and urged the UK government to support an independent international inquiry into the killings and review the sale of arms that could be used in violation of international law. His statement was read at a pro-Palestinian demonstration outside the prime minister’s office on Downing Street and posted on his Facebook page.
6. <https://www.eupac.org/corbyn-end-all-arms-sales-to-israel-now/> - In August 2024, Jeremy Corbyn reiterated his call for an end to all arms sales to Israel, amid criticisms of the UK's indirect involvement in the Gaza conflict. He shared a photo of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, detained after refusing to abandon his colleagues and patients, highlighting the moral weakness of those complicit in genocide. Corbyn's call was in response to the UK's partial suspension of arms exports to Israel, which he argued was insufficient given the scale of the conflict and the UK's role in supplying military equipment used in Gaza. He emphasized the need for a complete arms embargo to prevent further complicity in alleged war crimes.
7. <https://www.jta.org/2018/04/09/israel/jeremy-corbyn-calls-review-arms-sales-israel-gaza-border-protests> - In April 2018, Jeremy Corbyn called for a review of arms sales to Israel, condemning its actions against Palestinians protesting on the Gaza border. He emphasized the right of Palestinians to protest against their conditions and the ongoing blockade and occupation. Corbyn criticized the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians and urged the UK government to support an independent international inquiry into the killings and review the sale of arms that could be used in violation of international law. His statement was read at a pro-Palestinian demonstration outside the prime minister’s office on Downing Street and posted on his Facebook page.