

POLITICAL ISSUE PROFILE:

Why Has The Prime Minister Resigned?

PART ONE: THE ANNOUNCEMENT:

On the 22 June, Sir Keir Starmer announced his resignation as Labour Party leader and Prime Minister, following a historic 172-seat majority won in July 2024. Starmer's support base was frequently criticised as being "wide but shallow," or a "loveless landslide," as he only won 33.7% of a low turnout election. The final straw for his departure was a devastating set of local, Scottish Parliament, and Welsh Senedd election results in May 2026, including a historic drop to just 11% of the vote in Wales. Four ministers, then Wes Streeting, the Health Secretary resigned, followed by the Defence



Secretary and Armed Forces Minister. The final straw was the Makerfield by-election. Whether Andy Burnham, the new MP for Makerfield, is opposed by any other Labour candidates awaits to be seen. We expect a new Prime Minister to be in post, at latest in September, though it might potentially be earlier.

PART TWO: THE CRITICISMS:

- Starmer's judgement came under increasing criticism. A major turning point occurred over his decision to appoint Peter Mandelson as the UK's Ambassador to the US, when ties to Jeffrey Epstein forced a public sacking, as well as concerns over Mandelson's business links to China and Russia.
- Ministers and MPs grew frustrated with his seemingly technical approach to policy, with many arguing he was a capable analyst but a poor decision-maker. MPs pointed to instances where he altered major policies three times in a single month under pressure, displaying a lack of a clear national vision.
- Senior Labour figures, including Lord Kinnock, publicly condemned Starmer for making "seriously bad judgments" and surrounding himself with weak advisers. There was particular concern about the operation of Downing Street, with a sense of disconnect between Starmer's Chiefs of staff, especially Morgan McSweeney and Sue Gray, and MPs.
- MPs and members on the left of the party felt that he was not embracing a "true" Labour agenda. Criticism became louder due to the number of U-turns (changes and backtracking) of decisions on individual government policies: farm taxes, pensioner heating, welfare reforms and fuel duty.

PART THREE: ANDY BURNHAM:

These factors coincided with the return of Andy Burnham. The former Mayor of Greater Manchester came back to Parliament via a by-election in the constituency of Makerfield. Starmer had previously blocked Burnham from seeking a Westminster seat in February 2026, but the Prime Minister's waning authority left him unable to stop Burnham's second run. Burnham secured a resounding victory in Makerfield, increasing Labour's vote share by nearly 10%, defeating Reform UK. This contrasted with Labour's national slump, positioning Burnham as the natural alternative to Starmer's leadership. He announced he would seek the leadership of the UK, forcing the Prime Minister to realise he couldn't win a leadership contest.

FULL SPEECH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGO1rZZq3j8>

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