ANTISEMITISM AND THE LABOUR PARTY

1. INTRODUCTION

INCIDENTS OF HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM

Nearly all political parties have at some point in their existence faced, in some form, allegations of racism, and specifically, antisemitism. The Labour party is not immune from this. In 2003, Labour MP Tam Dalyell complained of a “cabal of Jewish advisers” unduly influencing the Prime Minister.1 In 2005, though it later withdrew them, Labour denied claims that posters (including one depicting then Conservative party leader, Michael Howard as Dickens’ Fagin) were antisemitic.2 In 2010 Labour faced calls to withdraw electoral candidates for their use of antisemitic tropes.3

Regrettably, in recent years, the Labour party has found itself facing further serious allegations. Stories about antisemitism and revelations of antisemitic rhetoric being employed by Labour supporters, members, office holders or others, have been published on an almost monthly basis since February 2016. However, concerns about antisemitism first made headlines the previous year, when Jeremy Corbyn became leader of the Labour party, albeit some matters related to the period prior to his election in May 2015.

Many stories and allegations of antisemitism have been published, with very little clarity on the numbers of reported incidents until 2019.4 The veracity5 and reliability6 7 of the Labour Party data has subsequently been called into question.8 In its analysis of antisemitic incidents in 2018, the Community Security Trust (CST) explained that the prominence of stories about antisemitism in the Labour party correlated with a rise in anti-Jewish behaviour, either through inspiring antisemitic acts or increasing awareness of the problem.9 10 Other research by the CST and Antisemitism Policy Trust shows a correlation between related political events and antisemitic Google searches.11

2. REPORTS AND LABOUR PARTY EFFORTS

INDIVIDUAL CASES

There have been attempts by the Labour party, some successful, to tackle concerns about antisemitism. The party has also produced a resource.12 For example, individual high-profile incidents have been addressed, albeit action has sometimes been slow, and the party has faced criticism for delays.13 For example:

- In 2015, the late MP Gerald Kaufman suggested “Jewish money” had influenced the Conservative party. His comments were denounced by Jeremy Corbyn, and Kaufmann was reprimanded by the Labour Chief Whip.14

- In 2016, Jeremy Corbyn agreed with Naz Shah MP that she should resign the whip temporarily following details of old antisemitic social media posts she had shared, being made public.15

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1 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2999219.stm
4 https://labourlist.org/2019/02/jennie-formby-provides-numbers-on-labour-antisemitism-cases/
5 https://twitter.com/margarethodge/status/1095011980925169664
6 https://twitter.com/daverich1/status/1095007926501150731
12 https://labour.org.uk/no-place-for-antisemitism/?utm_source=bst&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LPAntisem
- In 2017, following a difficult interview with radio presenter Emma Barnett, apparent supporters of Jeremy Corbyn directed antisemitic abuse at her online. Mr. Corbyn issued a strong denunciation of those doing so, the same day.16

- In 2018, Tony Greenstein was expelled from the party, including for use of the word ‘Zio’.17

THE ROYALL REPORT

In February 2016, the co-chair of the Oxford University Labour Club resigned, alleging that the student left had “some kind of problem with Jews”.18 A number of specific incidents subsequently came to light, including derogatory use of the word ‘Zio’ to describe Jewish students and slurs that the Nazi death camp Auschwitz was used as a “cash cow”.19

The Labour Students organisation began to investigate the allegations but no report was released.20 The Labour party then commissioned Baroness Jan Royall to lead an inquiry. She reported to the Labour NEC in May 2016, but it agreed “to publish the recommendations only.”21 With her report seemingly blocked, Royall stated that the issues she had considered would be dealt with by Shami Chakrabarti’s wider inquiry into antisemitism in Labour.22 When that report made no mention of her findings, Royall suggested she would self-publish,23 but her report later leaked to the Jewish Chronicle.24

Royall had found that despite there being no institutional problem at the Oxford University Labour Club, there was a cultural problem. She later voiced concern at the decision not to discipline, but rather to offer a warning to, two individuals over their conduct relating to the affair.25 The handling of the Royall report, and specifically the lack of engagement with the Jewish community, was heavily criticised by the Union of Jewish Students.26

THE CHAKRABARTI REPORT

On 29 April 2016, Shami Chakrabarti was tasked by Jeremy Corbyn to inquire into antisemitism, and other forms of racism in the Labour Party. The terms of reference included a focus on acceptable behaviour, compliance procedures, training, party rules, and the environment within the Labour Party.27

In her report, Chakrabarti dismissed claims of institutional antisemitism but cited a “bitter incivility of discourse”. She suggested that Labour should seek to set a gold standard for “disagreeing well”. She surmised that complaints and disciplinary procedures were ‘wanting’.

The Chakrabarti report made four key recommendations:

1) Zionism/Zio should effectively be outlawed as a term of abuse

2) There should be robust condemnation of stereotypes (including tropes about Jews and money, media control, Jewish dual loyalty or prescriptive political views)

3) Nazi metaphors and Holocaust obfuscation are unacceptable

4) The Macpherson principle should apply in relation to antisemitism

17 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/labour-activist-tony-greenstein-expelled-from-party-over-antisemitism_uk_5a89ddf7e4b00bc49f4559ec
22 Ibid
26 Ibid
In addition, Chakrabarti made a number of recommendations on disciplinary procedures in order to depoliticise the process. She did, however, rule out lifetime membership bans, something Shadow Chancellor Rt Hon John McDonnell MP had voiced support for.28

The Jewish communal response to the report was decidedly mixed,29 with a representative of the Board of Deputies later labelling it a “whitewash”.30 The public launch of the report was marred, particularly by comments directed at Ruth Smeeth MP, considered to be antisemitic (the individual responsible was later expelled for bringing the party into disrepute).31 There was further outrage when it was announced that Chakrabarti was to be ennobled shortly after the report was published.32 She was subsequently elevated to the position of Shadow Attorney General.

Concerning the implementation of the report, there was a rule change, held over from the 2016 Labour Party Conference, agreed at the 2017 Conference.33 This change prevented alleged perpetrators of antisemitism from using the ‘strongly held belief’ defence. Until March 2018, there had been no official statement about further implementation efforts, but the Labour NEC was believed to have adopted, and the Leader’s office endorsed, the IHRA definition of antisemitism.34 Chakrabarti herself said in April 2018 that she had not had the resources to implement her report but believed the Labour General Secretary Jennie Formby would do so.35 Meanwhile, in 2019, concerns were raised, though disputed by the Labour party, about the thoroughness of the evidence collating process for the report.36

THE HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

In October 2016, following the Chakrabarti report37, the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) launched an inquiry into antisemitism. The committee took oral evidence from, amongst others, Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn. The HASC press release stated that, in a cross-party report “agreed unanimously without division”, members had noted that: “the failure of the Labour Party consistently to deal with antisemitic incidents in recent years risks lending force to allegations that elements of the Labour movement are institutionally anti-Semitic”.38

THE FALCONER REPORT

In a House of Commons debate on antisemitism on 20 February 2019, Rt Hon George Howarth MP referenced an offer from Lord Falconer to assist the Labour party in overseeing disciplinary cases.39 This was subsequently confirmed in news reports which quoted Falconer as having made the offer, “because of my horror that the party has not been able to show it is dealing with antisemitism properly”.40 In his first interview about the role, and in subsequent remarks41, Falconer expressed concern about existing disciplinary structures.42 He also confirmed that should an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission proceed, he would not take forward his proposed initiative43 though later indicated a change of heart.44 Others expressed concern about the relative independence of a Labour peer in overseeing internal party matters45 46 despite the Labour party expressing full confidence in him.47

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30 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/aug/04/shami-chakrabarti-peersage-labour-tensions-corbyn
32 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/aug/04/shami-chakrabarti-peersage-labour-tensions-corbyn
33 https://www.ft.com/content/995cb19b-a2d5-11e7-87c6-8f909e89d44a
36 Ibid
38 http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1091358/labour-anti-semitism-jeremy-corbyn-independence-group-tony-blair-lord-charlie-falconer
39 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lord-falconer-interview-corbyn-will-never-enter-no-10-while-people-fear-he-and-labour-are-anti-semitic-tfszwr0Own
40 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0bda4764-41ec-11e9-aad0-a30b9f78dd65b
42 https://twitter.com/Freedland/status/1102485917170386552?s=19
43 https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mai/05/margaret-hodge-corbyn-misled-me-over-antisemitism-labour
44 https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/corbyn-hits-back-at-hodge-over-antisemitism-claims-37884380.html
THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION INVESTIGATION

On 7 March 2019, the Equality and Human Rights Commission announced it was ‘considering’ using its statutory enforcement powers to investigate the Labour party over a belief that the party may have discriminated against people because of their ethnicity and religious beliefs.48 A member of Labour’s NEC posted on social media that the organisation should be abolished, later clarifying that others agreed with her position which she said she had made clear previously.49 The Labour party asked for, and was granted, an extension to respond to the EHRC’s notice.50 It was reported in April 2019, that the evidential threshold for investigation had been met51 and in late May 2019, the EHRC confirmed it had launched an investigation.52 One member of Labour’s NEC accused the EHRC of political point scoring53, and separately, stories emerged of threats against the EHRC.54

3. THE ‘ENOUGH IS ENOUGH’ RALLY AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Allegations of antisemitism in the Labour party became national news for more than a week at the end of March 2018, following concerns relating to an antisemitic mural which Mr. Corbyn had commented about, on social media years earlier.55 The Jewish community, angered by the lack of action on antisemitism, called a rally titled ‘Enough is Enough’ and set out its concerns in a detailed letter.56 Following some short press statements, Jeremy Corbyn’s office issued a response.57 The Jewish community then further specified its concerns about leadership, education, engagement and processes, specifically asking Jeremy Corbyn to condemn allegations of a smear levelled at both the Jewish community and at Labour MPs that had supported the community.58 Following a subsequent exchange of letters, a meeting was agreed59 between the two parties and they met approximately one month later. Jeremy Corbyn wrote an article in advance of the meeting, in which he admitted not enough had been done to address the antisemitism of a “small number of our members and supporters”.60 Following the meeting, the Jewish community released a statement61 branding it a disappointment and “missed opportunity” and six months on, the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) Chairman Jonathan Goldstein wrote62 that “not one” of the Jewish communal requests had been met. One year later, Jewish communal leaders said the problem had worsened.63

During the intensified coverage of antisemitism over this period, a number of stories uncovered further incidents of alleged, and proven, antisemitism. For example, a letter claiming a “very powerful special interest group” had used “immense strength” to “employ the full might of the BBC” received some 2000 ‘likes’ and hundreds of Facebook shares, with many supportive comments from self-declared Labour members.64

The English local elections took place in May 2018. There appeared to be a large swing against the Labour party across the country in areas with a significant Jewish population, for example, the London Borough of Barnet, and Kersal in Salford. Labour Shadow Ministers and others spoke to the impact of the antisemitism crisis on voters’ decisions.65 This pattern was repeated in the local elections in 2019.66
4. ALLEGATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL ANTISEMITISM:

As one prominent Human Rights Barrister, Adam Wagner, has explained, there are concerns about institutional antisemitism within the Labour party. The Macpherson report, as noted above, described institutional racism as the: “collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin.” Racism, it said, can be “seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping”, and caused by or potentially defeated through “policy, example and leadership”.

Of course, any institution must have proper and effective grievance and disciplinary procedures for handling, assessing and acting on complaints of discrimination. As noted, various reports, both internal and external, have suggested Labour party processes have not been fit for purpose.

IHRA AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Over the summer months of 2018 Labour’s code of conduct was under intense scrutiny. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism is the international standard for defining anti-Jewish hatred. It has been adopted by IHRA member states and others, the British Government, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and over 130 Local Authorities. It is comprised of a short two sentence paragraph followed by 11 bullet points providing examples of what “may” constitute antisemitic behaviour, taking into account overall context. Though the Labour party was considered to have adopted the definition in full, it was claimed at the meeting with the Jewish community, that the Party had only adopted the short paragraph without the bullet point examples. The Labour party initially offered its own Code of Conduct on antisemitism, subject to review. This was criticised by an unprecedented coalition of Rabbis, the Chief Rabbi, and the CST which wrote a detailed explanation of the Code’s perceived flaws. The Parliamentary Labour Party adopted the IHRA definition and the party eventually dropped its revised code in full, with a ‘clarification’ offered by Jeremy Corbyn, not accepted.

PARTY STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS FOR ADDRESSING ANTISEMITISM

Defining antisemitism has not been the only issue of concern in relation to Labour’s disciplinary efforts. A commitment by the party to deal with a number of high-profile cases by the end of July 2018 was not met, and allegations have been made about the scale, transparency, effectiveness, impartiality and independence of the party disciplinary processes. In a leaked recording of a conversation with Dame Margaret Hodge, Jeremy Corbyn himself raised concerns about disciplinary procedures.
Speaking at the conference of an organisation said by the Jewish Labour Movement to have a “culture of antisemitism”, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell said that he would “take up” abuse of suspended activist Jackie Walker, who was nonetheless subsequently expelled, with Jeremy Corbyn. Elsewhere, party official Seumas Milne, who has also been the subject of antisemitism allegations, was also said to have influence over disciplinary matters. This, and disputes over the action taken in previous cases, raised questions about the independence of the party mechanisms which Labour National Constitution Committee (NCC) member Peter Mason was recorded saying had been interfered with. Subsequently, when Deputy Labour leader Tom Watson MP handed a file of some 50 complaints of antisemitism to the Leader’s Office, Labour sources were said to have downplayed any suggestion that the Leader could have oversight of disciplinary cases.

New allegations of political interference later emerged, including email evidence, which prompted Jewish communal representative organisations to respond, noting explicit concern given assurances they were given to the contrary. The Labour party said the allegations related to an outdated, and since revised, process. Around the same time, it was reported that Laura Murray, who was at the centre of some of the allegations about interference, had been appointed interim head of complaints. This was quickly dismissed by Labour sources despite some Labour parliamentarians standing by the story and it was later announced she had indeed been appointed as head of complaints. A motion to Labour’s NEC, backed by deputy leader Tom Watson MP, calling for an independent complaints process was withdrawn in the face of defeat. New rules proposed by Jeremy Corbyn, but opposed by the Jewish Labour Movement, were agreed.

A number of cases of alleged antisemitism linked to Labour members were passed by LBC radio to the police for investigation and led to arrests for ‘publishing or distributing material likely to stir up racial hatred’. Some campaign groups suggested the Labour party might have been negligent in its handling of said cases.

Allegations of interference in the disciplinary process have been levelled at the Labour Party General Secretary Jennie Formby, something she vehemently refutes. In April 2018, she pledged to make tackling antisemitism a “central priority” in her role and set out action she planned to take. However, concerns were raised, and have been many times subsequently, about both the actions taken and their efficacy. Formby’s ability to oversee action on antisemitism was itself called into question by some, who cited the employment by Formby of a Labour activist known to have made antisemitic comments. A number of MPs voiced concern both about Formby’s perceived, initial refusal to provide them...
with data about action on antisemitism and her comment to Labour’s Parliamentary Party that it was “impossible” to rid the party of antisemitism. Formby’s actions in relation to antisemitism were said by Tom Watson to have “very patently... not been adequate”. Watson subsequently asked colleagues to copy him into complaints about antisemitism (some did so in the public domain) and for a point-person in the party to be identified. He was publicly criticised by Jennie Formby for having done so.

The conduct of Labour National Executive Committee (NEC) members has also been called into question. A recording of NEC Member Pete Willsman emerged after a meeting of the executive at which antisemitism had been discussed. The recording clearly highlights Willsman claiming that Jewish “Trump fanatics” were making up allegations of antisemitism in the Party. Willsman accused the coalition of Rabbis, that had voiced opposition to Labour’s Code of Conduct as having made up “duff information without any evidence at all”. He was subsequently re-elected to the NEC. Willsman has said that some of his comments were misreported (although he did apologise for others). Willsman was subsequently re-suspended when it emerged he had said, amongst other things, “It’s almost certain who is behind all this antisemitism against Jeremy. Almost certainly it was the Israeli embassy”. The Jewish community called for his expulsion from the NEC. Meanwhile, other allegations about the conduct of NEC members have been the focus of newspaper reports and, as detailed below, the NEC disciplinary process was called into question over its handling of MP Chris Williamson’s case.

The election of Claudia Webbe to chair of the Labour Party’s disputes panel during a meeting of the NEC was seen as controversial, given she had previously defended Ken Livingstone and a Labour member who had been expelled. Webbe replaced Christine Shawcroft who had resigned amidst allegations of antisemitism, citing harassment and her wish not to be a “distraction” as the reasons.

Stephen Marks was elected to Labour’s National Constitutional Committee, which has ultimate oversight of disciplinary matters for the party. Marks’ previous statements that those alleging antisemitism in the Labour party should be suspended, were called into question. He was re-elected in 2019.

The Labour party hired Gordon Nardell QC as in-house Counsel to tackle a backlog of unresolved cases. Nardell’s independence was queried for his past associations with the Labour leadership, groups and activists including suspended members. He later quit the role.

Concerns about Labour Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn’s previous associations and conduct have been raised repeatedly. These include, but are not limited to:

- an article he wrote in which he said the BBC decision not to broadcast a 2009 Gaza appeal demonstrated “unbelievably high levels of influence that Israel’s government appears to have in the upper echelons of parts of the media” and that Israel has “control of US foreign policy”.

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[126] https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/tom-watson-unleashes-savage-attack-14044990
[127] https://twitter.com/AliFosterRDG/status/1101558625800200192
[129] https://twitter.com/BenGartside/status/110154942680642337
[133] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/apr/06/leaked-minutes-show-labour-at-odds-over-antisemitism-claims
[137] https://www.order-order.com/people/claudia-webbe/
[141] https://twitter.com/magnitsky/status/1123886052636217921
Jeremy Corbyn has cited Jewish support for his activities when questioned, including a letter to the Guardian. It quickly emerged that the letter had been signed by a number of people who were themselves subjects of inappropriate behaviour or antisemitism allegations. A counter-letter was signed by more than 550 people.

The processes for disciplining MPs have also been called into question. Following reports that he was to be admonished for arranging a film screening, relating to a suspended Labour activist, MP Chris Williamson was at the centre of further controversy when it emerged he had suggested Labour had been "too apologetic" on the issue of antisemitism. Initially, he was given a 'notice of investigation' in relation to a "pattern of behaviour". Journalists and others pointed out that this sanction was incongruous with previous alleged indiscretions by MPs. Williamson was later suspended. Pressure from the Deputy Party Leader and Tribune Group of MPs was said by some, to have influenced the leadership of the party in the decision to suspend Williamson, though the Labour party categorically denied this. As detailed below, Williamson was later re-admitted and then suspended again following concern about the disciplinary processes.

Jeremy Corbyn was criticised for sacking shadow Brexit Minister Baroness Dianne Hayter for likening the “bunker mentality” of his leadership to “the last days of Hitler.” The comment was said by the party to be “grossly insensitive to
Jewish staff in particular" but MPs including Wes Streeting contrasted the action to a failure to act in other cases. Peers considered holding a vote of no confidence in the leadership as a result.168

The Labour party has also been referenced in other national stories, for example: where public figures associated with the party were embroiled in controversy for sharing panels,169 170 in relation to whistle blowing,171 or for other matters.

The charge of institutional racism re-emerged in the summer of 2019, when the BBC broadcast a Panorama programme, including interviews with numerous ex-staff members alleging interference in, and poor handling of cases of antisemitism.172 A number of further allegations emerged in the following weeks.173 174 Jeremy Corbyn said there were "many inaccuracies" in the programme175 and spoke out against it on other occasions.176 The Labour Party accused the whistle blowers of having 'personal and political axes to grind'177 and demanded the programme be removed from the iplayer.178 The ex-staffers in turn announced their intention to sue the party179, and programme presenter John Ware later announced he also planned legal action.180 Reports in November 2019 indicated the BBC was set to reject the Labour Party complaints about the programme.181 A number of MPs182 183, unions184 and others185 registered their support for the staff, including the Tribune group of MPs.186 The response to the programme prompted a special shadow cabinet meeting, prior to which Jewish groups urged action.187

LABOUR PARTY REPRESENTATIVES, AFFILIATES, SUPPORTERS AND OTHERS

Apart from questions having been raised about party structures and overseers, a number of stories were published about the behaviour and re-admittance of the party of councillors188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200, National Policy Forum representatives201, a Welsh AM202, sitting MPs203 204 205 206, former MPs207 208 and others

168 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-49031917
170 https://www.thescus.co.uk/news/9358080/labour-mp-anti-semitism-storm/
172 https://www.coryn-alliance-interfere-in-labour-antisemitism-inquiries-d59393x
174 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/corbyn-enforcer-ignored-racism-claim-cgh9bq7
176 https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/corbyn-and-mccuskey-launch-attack-on-labour-deputy_uk_5d29e6e4e40c02a5a59b732c?
guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS93c1NybDMvY29yZGh0dXJlL3Byb2ZpbGUvZ2luY29tL3JlYWRzL3BheWxvZ2VzL3Byb2Nnb3 dew-in-1&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAABeMaSNe5sUb4PfGyyd7PBQc8cMNLA4GQzOnID7N2ZC7IsX7Z2KgW2W5G- Rwn8nWP62PU1Pm6aEw1guaMg2jkqyw_LWR0qEWOVoTaTzBqzTcYbPmuOnO4Yj3E810_Nlm0O_p_iQ3RKKSE5EuYLRwZQoAeO-wWqAlaqf0
177 https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/jeremy-corbyn-labour-antisemitism-panorama-documentary-whistleblower-a8999441.html
178 https://www.bmmagazine.co.uk/news/labour-demands-bbc-remove-panorama-on-antisemitism-from-iplayer/
179 https://www.theseguardian.co.uk/politics/2019/jul/13/whistleblowers-to-sue-labour-as-antisemitism-row-deepens
180 https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/bbc/labour-john-ware-sues-as-labour-as-antisemitism-complaint-rejected-5144319.article
181 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/news/uk/labour-demands-bbc-remove-panorama-on-antisemitism-from-iplayer-
184 https://thesetimes.co.uk/article/political-parties/labour-party/news/105436/labour-mps-say-shadow-cabinet-members-%E2%80%9Cbe-concerned%E2%80%9D
186 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/politics/labour-antisemitism-unions-whistleblowers-corbyn-unite-gmb-a9009631.html
187 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/politics/labour-antisemitism-unions-whistleblowers-corbyn-unite-gmb-a9009631.html
188 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-49130095
190 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/scotland/antisemitism-row-as-ex-mp-shares-offensive-cartoon-ksv52nc2q
A number of Labour candidate selections have also been called into question, including the high-profile case of Peterborough City Council candidate Alan Bull, who posted an article alleging the Holocaust was a hoax. He claimed this was for the purpose of debate. Bull had been reported to the party but no action taken. When his case was eventually heard, it led to the resignation of Labour’s disputes panel chair Christine Shawcroft, whose email challenging his suspension was made public.

A number of Labour candidates for the 2019 local council elections were the subject of antisemitism allegations, and in a number of cases were suspended. This included candidates for: Stratford-Upon-Avon; Chesterfield; Staffordshire Moorlands; Brighton and Hove; three candidates for Torbay Council in Devon; North

That were found to have made, or were under investigation for, alleged antisemitic remarks. Cases included, for example, that of a Labour activist who posted an antisemitic image, which it was alleged they had asked permission from a white supremacist website to use, of an alien with the Jewish Star of David smothering the Statue of Liberty’s face. The activist was given only a formal ‘reminder of conduct’ despite pressure from the local Labour MP for action. There was a (second) suspension of a Woking Labour activist for making remarks about Jews having “big noses”, after she had been re-admitted following a hearing in 2014, and suspension of a Labour and Momentum activist after querying the remit of Holocaust Memorial Day and making dismissive comments about the requirement for security at Jewish schools. Former MP Jim Sheridan was suspended for a post stating he had lost respect and empathy for the Jewish community, for what he claimed it was doing with “Blairite plotters” to the Labour party and the “long suffering people of Britain”. Sheridan apologised and was subsequently reinstated and appointed Deputy Leader of Renfrewshire Labour. There were also revelations that a number of senior Labour party figures were part of a private Facebook group, whose members posted antisemitic comments and conspiracy theories.

A number of Labour candidates for the 2019 local council elections were the subject of antisemitism allegations, and in a number of cases were suspended. This included candidates for: Stratford-Upon-Avon; Chesterfield; Staffordshire Moorlands; Brighton and Hove (the suspension was met with a suggestion by one activist that there should be a march on the local synagogue to protest); Erewash; three candidates for Torbay Council in Devon; North
Devon; Amber Valley; Leicestershire; Yorkshire; High Peak; and Fylde Borough Council in Lancashire.

Some campaigners have levelled further allegations following their own research. In Liverpool, a candidate apologised for calling someone a ‘typical Jew’ as a teenager, whilst a previous candidate in the region, for the Norris Green ward, had stood down after allegedly making antisemitic, conspiratorial posts online. In Manchester, City Council candidate Jade Doswell, who had apologised for a social media post from 2014 saying the Israeli flag made her feel “a little bit sick” in her mouth, “liked” a post on Facebook suggesting Dame Margaret Hodge should be prosecuted for a data breach. A Dartford candidate was criticised by antisemitism campaigner Rachel Riley for sharing a petition seeking to attack Riley. The suitability of former London Assembly member Murad Qureshi, as a European election candidate, was called into question when it emerged he had queried the credibility of the trial of Nazi leader Adolph Eichmann and retweeted messages for which he apologised, implying Jewish privilege and power. Ex-NEC member Martin Meyer, another candidate for the European elections apologised for a message he had sent suggesting antisemitism stories were being manufactured by the ‘Israel lobby’.

In a by-election in 2019, the social media activity of Labour candidate and now MP Lisa Forbes was called into question after it was revealed she had ‘liked’ a post on Facebook suggesting Theresa May had a ‘Zionist agenda’. Forbes apologised, stating that she had liked a video of children praying in New Zealand after the Christchurch mosque attacks and had not read the words about Mrs May alongside it. Forbes also posted that she had ‘enjoyed’ a thread laden with conspiracy theories about ISIS. Jeremy Corbyn said she was “not a racist in any way”. Jewish groups agreed to meet Forbes to discuss her actions.

Numerous concerns were raised around the 2019 General Election, in relation to existing candidates and potential selections. Some candidates were reportedly dropped over concerns about alleged antisemitism. Jewish groups have also defended Labour’s candidate for the High Peak who apologised for posting that said the Israeli flag made the party candidate feel “sick”.

The Labour party conference since 2015 have appeared to be a focal point for some of the problems. These have included: John Mann MP being labelled a ‘CIA ********’ because he had tried to tackle the “antisemitism nonsense”; calls to ban the Jewish Labour Movement (a leading member of which had been heckled by delegates the previous year) and suggestions it had colluded with right wing media; proposals at a fringe meeting to debate whether the Holocaust
happened; and distribution of a Marxist newspaper outside the conference, quoting Nazi official Reinhard Heydrich. The 2018 conference was no different with reports emerging about Luciana Berger MP’s requirement for police protection and other incidents including someone suggesting from the conference stage that allegations of antisemitism were part of an orchestrated campaign. In 2019: antisemitic leaflets were handed out in the conference hall; a rule change relating to the handling of antisemitism cases was due to be held on the Jewish sabbath; concerns were raised about an LRC fringe event; and a Jewish woman claiming never to have experienced antisemitism received an ovation.

In addition, there has been widespread concern about posts on Labour-linked social media sites and Labour’s connection with fringe groups, for example, Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL). Prominent JVL members have dismissed allegations of antisemitism, sought to oppose a Labour party Conference motion on antisemitism and have defended Ken Livingstone’s behaviour. One of JVL’s founders admitted the group was set up to challenge allegations of antisemitism in the Labour party, the group’s Secretary claimed Jews were “in the gutter” and colluding with the far-right, and another JVL executive member has claimed that the Labour Party is “a pawn of Zionist organizations that place loyalty to Israel’s interests above advancing the Labour Party”. Concerns have been raised about JVL delivering training on antisemitism to Labour party groups. Another group, the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) which has Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell as its Honorary President, has been accused of using antisemitic tropes.

APPARENT VICTIMISATION

Jewish Counsellors, MPs and others have detailed examples of antisemitism they have received whilst discharging their public duties, and the effect on their mental health. Joe Goldberg, Natan Doran, Adam Langleben and Philip Rosenberg alleged abusive encounters at the hands of colleagues and others. The Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) raised concerns about this type of behaviour at Constituency Labour Party (CLP) meetings, including at Birkenhead CLP which refused antisemitism training due to the Jewish Labour Movement’s potential association “with ISIS and the Israeli Government”. Southend West Constituency saw a motion about the Pittsburgh synagogue attack amended to remove a call for all forms of antisemitism to be eradicated, and Stroud Green CLP was to hold an open forum on antisemitism which local MP Catherine West branded “clearly unacceptable” and said would be stopped.

274 https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/jewish-mp-luciana-berger-flanked-13298354
277 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/throw-out-antisemitic-party-members-now-corbyn-urged-57f1wq9lq6
Two non-Jewish councillors in Peterborough were moved to detail ill-treatment they suffered for voicing concerns about antisemitism, as was a former Secretary of Westminster CLP. Jewish members of the Labour party, including Holocaust survivors, have voiced their concern at antisemitism in CLP meetings. Such was the strength of feeling, that the JLM held a meeting to discuss whether to cut its association with the party in March 2019. Letters acknowledging the problems and asking it to remain were sent by Jeremy Corbyn, the Shadow Cabinet, a number of Labour MPs and others. Jeremy Corbyn’s previous call for the severance of ties to JLM’s forerunner, Poale Zion was raised by journalists at the time. The JLM, in an indicative vote, resolved to stay in the Labour Party but a number of cases of antisemitism raised by members were reported following the meeting. JLM subsequently suspended all training when it was reported that the Labour Party was in discussion with Birkbeck College, University of London, about a training course, having not liaised with JLM. The group later passed a motion of no confidence in Jeremy Corbyn at its AGM in April 2019, in advance of which Shadow Attorney General Shami Chakrabarti had asked the group not to ‘personalise’ the issue.

Meanwhile a number of MPs, both Jewish and not, faced calls for no confidence motions at local Labour party meetings for speaking out against antisemitism, such as in Bristol, Canterbury, London and Liverpool. The Human Rights Barrister Adam Wagner suggested that the behaviour by the party towards MPs such as Dame Margaret Hodge and Ian Austin, both of whom were subject to (in one case only) disciplinary processes, seemingly for speaking out against antisemitism, might fall under the legal definition of ‘Victimisation’ – or being treated less well for complaining about discrimination. In the case of Luciana Berger and Wavertree CLP, the suggestion by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell that Berger should pledge loyalty if she didn’t want to face a no confidence motion and the ready dismissal by Jennie Formby of claims of bullying by the CLP did little to reduce concerns about such victimisation. Allegations of bullying and antisemitic behaviour have also been made in relation to Dame Margaret Hodge MP and investigated in relation to the treatment of Dame Louise Ellman MP.

Beyond the concerns about the suitability of structures and the propriety of their overseers, there has been significant worry about the wider culture of denial and victimisation in the Labour party. For example, Jewish members of Hackney North CLP were said to be in tears at the passing of a motion rejecting charges of racism.

302 https://twitter.com/robfuller91/status/110150282869091328
304 https://labourlist.org/2019/03/jennie-formby-took-advice-from-lord-blunkett-on-labours-handling-of-antisemitism/
307 https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/birmingham-news/laboratories-celebrate-102-years-23643848
308 https://twitter.com/CJ_Appleby/status/1057570369169688964
311 https://twitter.com/robfuller91/status/110150282869091328
312 https://twitter.com/robfuller91/status/110150282869091328
314 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
318 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
319 https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/jeremy-corbyn-wont-be-leader-forever-says-ally-as-fresh-anti-semitism-allegations-grip-labour_uk_5ca9cb0ee4b0aa0f6d4ef267
321 https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/jeremy-corbyn-wont-be-leader-forever-says-ally-as-fresh-anti-semitism-allegations-grip-labour_uk_5ca9cb0ee4b0aa0f6d4ef267
323 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
324 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
325 https://twitter.com/SocialistVoice/status/1094633459417604096
328 https://twitter.com/robfuller91/status/110150282869091328
332 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
333 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
335 https://www.paymentwatch.co.uk/paying/an-end-to-labour科教的budget?
Following the motion of No Confidence by Wavertree CLP about Berger, and subsequent revelations about the local branch, including that the chair of the locally party had links to antisemitic conspiracists and others. Luciana Berger resigned from the Labour party, calling it institutionally antisemitic. Her resignation led to an acknowledgement by Momentum chief Jon Lansman, and others, of the problem of Labour party antisemitism. Other Labour MPs that joined Berger in resigning, such as Mike Gapes, also alleged the party to be racist and antisemitic. Joan Ryan MP said the party posed an existential threat to Jewish people. A number of Peers, councillors and others, both Jewish and not, also resigned on similar terms, for example, a former Croydon Councillor, and Councillors in Hastings, and Brighton. The MPs' resignations, and that of Ian Austin MP, were met with further antisemitic abuse. Another Jewish Labour MP, Dame Louise Ellman, resigned in October 2019 over antisemitism. She was criticised by a member of the Labour NEC for doing so.

5. DANGEROUS DISCOURSE
The failure to properly address dangerous discourse, such as Holocaust revisionism, has led to previously marginal views becoming more mainstreamed in Labour party forums both offline and on the internet.

ANTISEMITISM AS A ‘WITCH HUNT’ AND OTHER SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS
A number of high-profile Labour figures have made unhelpful, disparaging or dangerous comments in relation to accusations of antisemitism. Anti-Jewish hatred has been dismissed as a ‘smear’ or as being ‘weaponised’ by its victims for political ends. Talk of Jewish and/or right-wing media plotting is dangerous and contrary to the British model for addressing hate crime, namely, the Macpherson principle. This translates to treating perceived victims with sensitivity, recording the crimes they report as ‘racist’ if perceived as such, and investigating claims with due diligence. The Chakrabarti report, detailed below, is explicit: “any seasoned activist who says that they are completely unaware of any such [antisemitic] discourse must be wholly insensitive or completely in denial”. Nonetheless, these claims are manifold and have continued.

In February 2016, following allegations of antisemitism at Oxford University Labour Club, former Labour Mayor of London Ken Livingstone stated that he had never heard anyone in the Labour party say anything antisemitic. He repeated this claim in April, and again thereafter.

When challenged about antisemitism by reporter John Pienaar in April 2016, Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP voiced opposition to racism, adding “I suspect that much of this criticism about “a crisis” in the party actually comes from those who are nervous of the strength of the Labour Party at a local level.”

In May 2016, Shadow Cabinet member Diane Abbott MP dismissed claims that the party had a problem, as “smears”. He repeated this claim in April, and again thereafter.

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writing that accusations of antisemitism in Labour “are among the wildest and least accurate of insults”.349

Speaking at a rally in May 2016, Andrew Murray, who was introduced as working for Unite the Union and leading the Stop the War campaign, said antisemitism was being used as the “latest stick to beat Jeremy Corbyn with” and called it a “disgraceful smear campaign” on behalf of the Conservative party.350 Murray later worked in Jeremy Corbyn’s office during the 2017 election. When the speech was brought back into the public domain in 2019, a Labour source said that Murray had shown strong opposition to antisemitism in the remarks he made and the context of 2016 was different to that of 2019.351

In August 2017, then Shadow Minister Chris Williamson MP said that although he wasn’t ruling incidents of antisemitism out, “it is a really dirty, lowdown trick, particularly the antisemitism smears”, continuing that “[m]any people in the Jewish community are appalled by what they see as the weaponisation of antisemitism for political ends”.352 In September, he claimed that online abuse or antisemitism was not from Labour party members, adding that if it was, they would have no place within the Labour party.353 In 2019, Williamson booked a room in the House of Commons for a screening of a film entitled ‘Witchhunt’, an hour long documentary about suspended Labour activist Jackie Walker, which he was then asked to cancel.354 The anti-racism organisation Hope Not Hate called for him to be ejected from the Labour party as a result.355

The same day it emerged that Williamson had said the party was “too apologetic” about antisemitism.356 Once Williamson was suspended, numerous claims emerged that he had fallen victim to a deliberate attack.357 Williamson was eventually re-admitted to the party, in part as a disciplinary process that was labelled a “disgrace”.358 More than 100 MPs and Peers and 70 staff members objected to his re-admission, as did some Labour councillors.360 The decision was reviewed following one of the adjudicators of his case querying the action taken.363 Some party members continued to insist Williamson was the victim of a witch hunt and some of the MPs who voiced opposition to his re-admission were the subject of reciprocal action from within their local party organisations.365 Williamson later took legal action, which was ultimately unsuccessful.367

In September 2017, interviewed at Labour party conference, film director Ken Loach suggested that some Labour MPs were making “absolute mischief” over claims of antisemitism in the party. He alleged they were seeking to destabilise Jeremy Corbyn because of his backing for Palestinians, and referred to “false stories of antisemitism”.368 Loach made similar comments at an event for ‘Labour Against The Witch Hunt’ in 2018.369 Ken Livingstone and Len McClusky have also made similar claims to Loach.370 There have also been motions submitted and discussed at trade union meetings and in local labour parties seeking to minimise or refute incidents of alleged antisemitism.371

During March 2018, when mainstream Jewish communal concerns were raised about antisemitism in the Labour party, the hashtag ‘the next Corbyn smear’ began to trend on social media and allegations of ‘smears’ were shared on Twitter by at least four Shadow Ministers.
The idea that antisemitism is weaponised also circulated on social media following a proposal at Wavertree Constituency Labour Party to debate a motion of no confidence in relation to local MP Luciana Berger, herself the victim of antisemitic abuse (and who subsequently left the party in 2019).

In April 2019, MP Ronald Campbell was criticised for saying “the Jewish issue” was being used “as a big stick to beat Corbyn and get rid of him”.372

Any attempt to address antisemitism in the Labour Party will need to address this type of conspiratorial language, and re-emphasize the Macpherson principles.

**LIVINGSTONE, HITLER AND ZIONISM**

Former Labour Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, has made a number of claims about Hitler and Zionism373 which have caused offence to the Jewish Community374 and, in some instances, been labelled as intentionally antisemitic,375 something Livingstone claims is neither fair nor accurate.376

Livingstone has claimed that Hitler supported Zionism377 and has specifically referenced the Ha’avara (or transfer) agreement. His remarks do not appropriately contextualise, and misrepresent, perspectives on Zionism amongst the Nazi political elite. In truth, the Nazis used Zionism amongst other tools as manipulation for antisemitic ends, as numerous historians, like the world expert Professor Francois Nicosia, and others have explained.

Professor Sir Richard Evans, of the University of Cambridge, has written of the Ha’avara agreement that it was worked out over several months in 1933, and was a very complicated set of financial arrangements, which allowed Jews to circumvent currency export restrictions introduced during the slump in 1931, on condition that this enabled German exports to go to Palestine.378 Livingstone has made a number of other claims, all contested by leading historians.

Livingstone was found guilty by Labour’s National Constitutional Committee of having brought the party into disrepute and was suspended for a year (rather than expelled).379 The Community Security Trust wrote of the decision that the Labour Party “as an institution, decided that it is fine for its members to repeatedly and deliberately abuse the memory of the Holocaust to wind up the Jewish community”.380 Following his suspension, Livingstone was subsequently referred for a new disciplinary investigation owing to further comments he had made, echoing his previous remarks.381 He eventually quit the party.382

**HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM**

Holocaust denial began as a deliberate political project to rehabilitate National Socialism and defame Jews.383 The architects of the project alleged a vast Jewish conspiracy to convince everyone that the Holocaust happened, and thereby induce enough guilt to extort money from Germany and land from the Palestinians. That particular National Socialist project has fallen away, but the antisemitic aspect remains.
As Dr Dave Rich of the CST has detailed, allegations of Zionist movement and Nazi collaboration emanated from the Soviet Union. It propagated a number of anti-Zionist slanders to the post-Holocaust Western radical Left in the 1950s/60s. This transformed Zionism in the minds of some on the left from an expression of Jewish national longing into a racist, colonial movement that collaborated with fascism before and during the Second World War, conspired with imperialism after it, and created an apartheid state in place of Palestine. This was the narrative inspiring politics on the hard left in the 1980s.

That same narrative characterises antisemitism as a historic problem, and the domain of the far right. The anti-racist left is, from this perspective, immune from antisemitism by definition. According to this worldview, other minorities, subject to structural racism, are victims whilst Jews are characterised as white (with the accompanying privileges conferred), wealthy and integrated and therefore incapable of suffering from discrimination. To this end, modern antisemitism appears to be difficult for some to comprehend.

Not only has this discourse spread, so too have many leading figures in the party been incautious about sharing platforms with those holding such views and seemingly conferring legitimacy upon them.

6. OPPONENTS OF ANTISEMITISM

Throughout the Labour party’s recent difficulties, there have been parliamentarians in both houses, public officials, and members across the country that have spoken out in solidarity with the Jewish community, defying all forms of antisemitism.

Over 100 Labour MPs and 50 peers signed a Jewish Labour Movement statement declaring: “the institutions of the Labour Party have betrayed our values” when it failed to expel Ken Livingstone. Many MPs and Peers spoke at the JLM’s Labour conference rally against antisemitism. In 2019, a large number of Labour party members and others signed a letter apologising to the Jewish community for antisemitism.

Numerous MPs have joined, participated in and led events with the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism, or have written articles condemning antisemitism both from within the party and outside it. Labour Peers raised their concerns, as a group, about antisemitism, though they have not had a response. Separately, 67 Labour Peers took out an advertisement in a national paper voicing their concerns. Afterwards a local constituency party voted to expel one of the peers. A delegation of Labour MPs met with Jeremy Corbyn to address concerns about antisemitism specifically, and others continue to raise the matter at Parliamentary Labour Party, council and other meetings regularly. A large number of MPs also attended the Jewish community ‘Enough is Enough’ rally or shared messages of support for it. John Mann MP quit the parliamentary party, citing antisemitism, to become a new advisor to the government on the issue. Beyond parliament there have been innumerable councillors, activists, party supporters, and public figures that have been resolute in taking a stand against antisemitism, and supporting those Jewish people suffering abuse both

384 https://capx.co/how-antisemitism-poisoned-the-british-left/
388 https://www.antisemitism.org.uk/the-appg/events
390 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0bda4764-41ec-11e9-aa0a-30b8d78dd83b
393 https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/labour-mps-rush-defend-hilary-18497344
394 https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/labour-mps-demand-independent-complaints-14264696
within and outside of the Labour party. The problem the party faces does not define, by any means, its whole membership, or the intentions of affiliated parliamentarians.

7. OTHER PARTIES

Of course, incidents of antisemitism are not limited to the Labour party. The Conservatives had to suspend members in Bradford and Hall Green, the Lib Dems took action in Bradford, the Green Party deputy leader apologised for posting an antisemitic picture on social media, and other parties have had to address antisemitism. Labour is not unique in this sense, but the scale and reach of the problem is, to date, unparalleled.

8. WHAT TO DO?

The Labour party’s response to antisemitism is for it to determine. However, there are a number of simple measures that might engender confidence amongst the Jewish community and others, many of which have been proposed over the years. The Jewish community invited Jeremy Corbyn to commit to a series of actions, including but not limited to; appointment of an independent ombudsman to conduct investigations into outstanding claims of Jew-hatred; resolution of outstanding and future cases swiftly under a fixed timescale; a ban on platform sharing with those suspended from the party for alleged antisemitism; work with mainstream Jewish groups and others to develop and implement education about antisemitism and to engage with main representative groups, not through fringe organisations. The Labour Party is yet to have built confidence that it is taking the right approach, with the Jewish community, Parliamentary Labour Party and some members of the Shadow Cabinet all voicing concern. Certainly, changes to messaging, culture and political education would be welcomed. The Labour Party’s next challenge will be to fully comply and engage with the EHRC investigation.

399 https://www.thenorthernEcho.co.uk/news/17545080.labour-has-become-the-nasty-party-says-hartlepool-mayor-after-resigning/
400 https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17546468.councillor-quits-anti-semitic-labour-party/
401 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/04/14/jeremy-corbyn-faces-pressure-anti-semitism-senior-us-democrat/
403 https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/labour-has-failed-to-address-antisemitism-says-party-s-shop-steward-a4184261.html
406 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/04/14/jeremy-corbyn-faces-pressure-anti-semitism-senior-us-democrat/
408 https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/labour-has-failed-to-address-antisemitism-says-party-s-shop-steward-a4184261.html
411 https://twitter.com/wesstreeting/status/97873864696895448
418 https://twitter.com/weststreeing/status/97873864696895448