KEY POINTS

- The Board of Deputies of British Jews stands for the central principle that there should be zero tolerance of antisemitism or any other form of racism in any part of our politics and in any part of our society.

- The recent series of revelations of antisemitism in the ranks of the Labour Party have been deeply disturbing to the Jewish community. As a progressive party, the Labour Party and its members should set a high bar on anti-racism and discrimination.

- There needs to be particular clarity around where criticism of Israel or the Israeli government is legitimate political discourse, and where it crosses the line into antisemitism.
  - Examples of the latter include support for – or failure to oppose – terrorism against Jews; celebration, denial, trivialisation or revision of the Holocaust; anti-Jewish conspiracy theories; theological antisemitism; and crude stereotypes about Jewish appearance, money or power.
  - We regard as antisemitic any exceptional treatment of Israel, where Israel is uniquely subjected, among all the countries in the world, to hostile behaviours such as denial of its right to exist and boycotts.

- Labour’s programme of tackling antisemitism should be supported by clear rules and guidelines, a strengthened compliance unit, training and an appropriate series of sanctions for those who breach the rules.

- The Board of Deputies has also been concerned about the reaction of some Labour members who (while not descending into antisemitism themselves) have reflected a culture of denial, disbelief, mockery and even censorship against Jews – including Jewish members of the Labour Party – who have expressed concerns about the problem of antisemitism. This issue is too important to be misused for factional or political ends. This represents an unhealthy culture which needs to be challenged at all levels.
The Board of Deputies has been disappointed at some of the responses from the leadership which should set an example. Reactions have frequently been slow, faltering, disbelieving and lacking in understanding of the issues. A number of earlier inquiries have not been published, which raises questions about transparency. We hope that, going forward, the leadership will show clarity and purpose on tackling antisemitism as a clear part of its anti-racism work.

SUBMISSION

Background

1. In this submission the Board of Deputies is responding to the invitation to participate in the Chakrabarti Inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism in Labour Party. The Inquiry has stated that it wishes to consult widely with the Jewish community. As we have said publicly “The Board of Deputies of British Jews welcomes the announcement of a new, much-needed inquiry into antisemitism in the Labour Party. The inquiry must be rigorous and fair in order to ensure that it has credibility.”

2. The Board of Deputies has no political affiliation. It is the democratically elected representative organisation of the United Kingdom Jewish community and represents the wide range of political, religious and other opinions within the community.

3. The Board of Deputies supports the working definition of antisemitism of the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) which is the forerunner of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. It is a well-recognised, comprehensive and fit-for-purpose definition, used by the UK Government and the US State Department. It was substantially adopted by the 31 member countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, including the UK, at its meeting in Bucharest on May 30th 2016. For ease of reference, the working definition is appended at the end of this submission in Appendix 1.

4. The Board of Deputies notes that Baroness Royall, following her investigation of allegations of antisemitism in the Oxford University Labour Club, has suggested that the Inquiry should consider whether adopting the Macpherson Principle that an antisemitic incident which may require investigation is “any incident which is perceived to be antisemitic by the victim or any other person” is appropriate. This Principle has our support.

5. The sad reality of Jewish communal life in Britain today is that our schools, synagogues and the offices of many Jewish communal organisations have to have security protection. Every day, members of the Jewish community approach the Board of Deputies with concerns about antisemitism in the media, advertising and in the workplace. We work closely with the Jewish community’s Community Security Trust.

1 https://www.bod.org.uk/statement-on-the-announcement-of-labour-inquiry-into-antisemitism/
2 https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/media-room/stories/working-definition-antisemitism
Boundaries of Acceptable Behaviour and Language

6. The Inquiry is looking at the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and language. Of course, criticism of policies of the Government of Israel is legitimate and, in their robust democracy, many Israelis criticise the Government themselves. However, it is completely unacceptable when that criticism spills over into violence, intimidation or hatred directed against Jews as a religious or ethnic group, much of which is clearly antisemitic, or the right of Israel to exist.

7. Statements that are clearly antisemitic include:

- Those which exhibit hatred or prejudice towards Jewish people as Jews.
- Those which deny the right of the State of Israel to exist or advocate its destruction.
- Those which support, or fail to oppose, terrorist acts committed in Israel or against Jews or Israelis elsewhere in the world, including celebrating terrorist organisations like Hamas and Hizbollah, or singing songs with the lyrics ‘rockets over Tel Aviv’.
- Holocaust celebration, denial, trivialisation or revisionism, or comparisons between Israel and Nazis.
- Jewish conspiracy theories, including the blood libel. This includes claims that the Jews control politics, the media or finances, and that Jews (or the Jewish state) are responsible for global ills, including ISIS or climate change.
- Theological antisemitism, including the depiction of Jews as ‘Christ-killers’, as the Antichrist, as G-d’s rejects, or as targets for hatred or violence on the basis of supposed actions of some Jews at the time of Mohammed.
- Those which stereotype the Jewish community in terms of physical or character-based attributes, such as that Jews have “big noses” or are “miserly”.

8. Actions which may or may not be antisemitic – depending on the context – but which create a sense of fear and apprehension amongst Jews can include: the waving of flags of terrorist organisations like Hamas and Hizbollah at demonstrations, protests against events with Israeli or Jewish speakers; targeted boycotts of, or vandalism against, Israeli or kosher products; and delegitimisation of the world’s only Jewish state, Israel. For example, we consider to be antisemitic the boycotting or questioning a country’s right to exist when these attitudes are solely directed to the only Jewish state of all the countries in the world. Similarly, we consider it to be antisemitic to use ‘Zionist’ or ‘Zio’ as a term of abuse against Jews.

9. Natan Sharansky – the former Soviet refusenik and Israeli politician – speaks of the ‘3D Test’ of antisemitism to judge when anti-Israel hostility has crossed the line into antisemitism. He suggests asking 3 questions: Is Israel being demonised? Are double-standards being employed? Is Israel being delegitimised? To the Board of Deputies, and many members of the Jewish community, this test has much value.

10. Zionism means nothing more or less than the aspiration of the Jewish people to self-determination. The right to self-determination is one of the fundamental rights included in the Charter of the United Nations. The Jewish people is as entitled to exercise this right as

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any other people in the world yet, to our community's shock and sadness, far too many people displaying hostility to the Jewish State or the Jewish people have attempted to use the word Zionism as a term of abuse. It is high time that this canard is laid to rest once and for all.

**Compliance**

11. The remit of the Inquiry is to develop clear and transparent compliance procedures for dealing with allegations of antisemitism and racism. The Inquiry will make recommendations for changes to the code of conduct and party rules if required.

12. The Board of Deputies seeks a clear, transparent and credible process for dealing with allegations of antisemitism within the Labour Party. If a complaint is made, it must be adjudicated on by an impartial panel which inspires confidence.

**Code of Conduct and Party Rules**

13. The Jewish Labour Movement has suggested a Labour Party rule change to strengthen the rules against members who engage in antisemitism, Islamophobia and racism. The Board of Deputies supports this. For ease of reference, the Jewish Labour Movement’s suggestions are appended in Appendix 2.

14. The code of conduct proposed at the beginning of the Inquiry was a helpful starting point. However, it might usefully reference more specific guidance on what would constitute abuse, and what sanctions might be applied to those who breach the code. It would be helpful for there also to be guidance in a code of conduct about acceptable behaviour for members of the Labour Party covering, for example, with whom it is acceptable to share a platform. The code of conduct should also make explicit reference to all of the protected characteristics in addition to ‘race, ethnicity or religion’ as the Labour Party should be a welcoming place for all in our society.

**Training**

15. The remit of the Inquiry includes investigating the need for training programmes for parliamentary candidates, MPs, Councillors and others to ensure all representatives understand the code of conduct as well as how to respond to allegations of racism.

16. The Board of Deputies welcomes the idea of training for Labour candidates and activists. The Board of Deputies is entirely willing to offer its own expertise to support training within Labour structures.

17. The Board of Deputies itself has a rolling programme of seminars for councillors of all political parties to introduce them to the interests and concerns of their Jewish residents, including, but not limited to, antisemitism. In addition, the Board of Deputies has produced a Jewish manifesto for the 2015 General Election[^5], and for the 2016 Scottish, Welsh and

Northern Ireland elections\(^6\) – again for politicians of all parties. These may feed into Labour Party training programmes.

**Making Labour a welcoming party for members of all communities**

18. Jews should be welcome in all political parties. The Labour Party should have zero tolerance of antisemitism. As a progressive party, the Labour Party needs to be seen to set an example when investigating allegations of racism within its own structures and membership base.

19. The Labour Party (and wider Labour movement) has a long tradition of promoting anti-racism and fighting discrimination. The rise of antisemitism and other forms of racism (including hatred of Muslims for being Muslim) is a worrying trend.

20. We stress opposition to all forms of racism but we note that antisemitism is a distinct form of racism and that even this Inquiry, which was prompted by antisemitic incidents within the Party, is not badged as being solely about antisemitism.

21. We would want to see an environment in which Jews (and others) are encouraged to report incidents. We are concerned about the culture of denial, disbelief, mockery and even censorship against Jews – including Jewish members of the Labour Party – who have expressed concerns about the problem of antisemitism. This issue is too important to be misused for factional or political ends. This represents an unhealthy culture which needs to be challenged at all levels. As we have said previously, “The Board of Deputies has been shocked and dismayed at the many people who seem to be in denial of the problem of antisemitism which is so clear. At the same time, we wish to recognise the many leading Labour politicians and activists from all sections of the Party who have spoken out against antisemitism in all its forms and to express concern at the intimidation to which some of them have been subjected.”\(^7\)

22. The Board of Deputies has been disappointed at some of the responses from the leadership, where it is most important to set an example. Reactions have frequently been slow, faltering, disbelieving and lacking in understanding of the issues. A number of earlier inquiries have not been published, which raises questions about transparency. We hope that, going forward, the leadership will show clarity and purpose on tackling antisemitism as a clear part of its anti-racism work.

23. On 27 April 2016, the Board’s President Jonathan Arkush spoke of “our longstanding concern that the Labour leadership has yet to confront the problem of antisemitism in the party… the leader must make it clear that allegations of antisemitism are not to be dismissed as arguments about Israel. Jeremy Corbyn must now respond to our repeated calls for him

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to accept that his meetings with rank antisemites before he became leader were not appropriate and will not be repeated."\(^8\)

24. The Board of Deputies hopes that this inquiry will mark the beginning of a more certain and clear Labour attitude against antisemitism, from the leader to the grassroots, including clarity about people and groups with whom it is not appropriate to share panels. We believe that the Inquiry’s report, together with the reports of the Royall Inquiry and that of Labour Students should be published in full to help to start re-establishing confidence in the transparency and commitment of the leadership to tackle this problem with the determination required.

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APPENDIX 1

EUMC WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

The purpose of this document is to provide a practical guide for identifying incidents, collecting data, and supporting the implementation and enforcement of legislation dealing with antisemitism.

Working definition: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.

Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.

Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.

Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).

Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel taking into account the overall context could include:

Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.

Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.

Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.
APPENDIX 2

Jewish Labour Movement

Proposed Rule Change - Constitutional Amendment

Strengthen the rules against members who engage in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism.

The Labour Party Rule Book 2016 Chapter 2 Membership rules Clause I Conditions of Membership, Section 8 currently makes allowances for the NEC to suspend members of the party who are considered to have acted in a way that is grossly detrimental to the Party.

This section reads (Page 9) reads as follows:

No member of the Party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NEC is prejudicial, or in any act which in the opinion of the NEC is grossly detrimental to the Party. Any dispute as to whether a member is in breach of the provisions of this subclause shall be determined by the NCC in accordance with Chapter 1 Clause IX above and the disciplinary rules and guidelines in Chapter 6 below. Where appropriate the NCC shall have regard to involvement in financial support for the organisation and/or the activities of any organisation declared ineligible for affiliation to the Party under Chapter 1.II.5 or 3.C above; or to the candidature of the members in opposition to an officially endorsed Labour Party candidate or the support for such candidature. The NCC shall not have regard to the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions.

Amendment

Add an additional sentence after the first sentence:

“A member of the Party who uses antisemitic, Islamophobic, racist language, sentiments, stereotypes or actions in public, private, online or offline, as determined by the NEC, shall be deemed to have engaged in conduct prejudicial to the Party.”

Add at the end of the final sentence after “opinions”:

“…except in instances involving antisemitism, Islamophobia or racism”

Insert new paragraph E (at Clause I, section 4(‘Exclusions’)):

“Where a member is responsible for a hate incident, being defined as something where the victim or anyone else think it was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on disability, race, religion, transgender identity, or sexual orientation, the NEC may have the right to impose the appropriate disciplinary options from the following options:

i. Suspension from membership or from holding office and representation of the Party for the duration of any prison sentence imposed, including a suspended sentence.

ii. Referral of disciplinary case to the NCC.

iii. Where the NEC determines it is appropriate and based on a conviction for a serious offence, resolve that a member is ineligible to be or remain a Party member, subject to the provisions of Chapter 6.I.2 below of the disciplinary rules.”