

19 July 2019

To members of the Shadow Cabinet, members of the Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour's National Executive Committee:

It has been widely reported that, over the coming days, Labour's Shadow Cabinet, Parliamentary Labour Party and National Executive Committee will discuss how the Labour Party can once again become an anti-racist party that welcomes all people, including Jews. For over a year, Jewish organisations have repeatedly made a series of recommendations which the Party must take to begin ridding itself of anti-Jewish racism. Sadly, to date, these have barely been heeded by the party's leadership. As such, we ask you to use the forthcoming meetings to commend, by binding resolution if necessary, the following steps to resolve this crisis. This is not an exhaustive list, but the minimum that we would expect:

Antisemitism disciplinary cases

- Outstanding and future cases should be brought to a swift conclusion under a fixed timescale. For example, the cases of Chris Williamson and Peter Willsman, whose offences are all on the public record, should be concluded in the next fortnight. Diaries should be cleared and funds made available to make this happen. On the basis of what we know, permanent exclusion should be the result of these cases.
- It cannot be right that virulent antisemites are extended more tolerance than party members who have supported other political parties, and the provision of automatic and permanent exclusion should be introduced as an option among the sanctions for racism complaints.
- Cases where antisemitic material is shared or retweeted on social media, should be considered in scope for disciplinary action.
- Labour should cease to enforce all non-disclosure agreements used against former staff and cease its legal and media persecution of whistleblowers.
- The lack of transparency in disciplinary cases has served to increase suspicion in the Jewish community and beyond. Key affected parties, including Jewish representative bodies, should be given the right to regular, detailed case updates, on the understanding of confidentiality.
- Labour should outsource its disciplinary process to an independent provider to eradicate any risk of systemic partisanship and factionalism. Other political parties may also benefit from such a service.

Relations with expelled and suspended members

- MPs, councillors and other party members should not support or campaign for people who have been suspended or expelled for antisemitism and neither party representatives nor CLPs should provide them with a platform. Anybody doing so should themselves be suspended from membership; and, in the case of MPs or peers, they should of course consequently also lose the party whip.
- It should be made clear that prominent offenders who have left or been expelled from the party, such as Ken Livingstone and Jackie Walker, will never be readmitted to membership.

Education

- The Party should promote the IHRA definition of antisemitism, with all its examples and clauses, to all members, branches and affiliates.
- The Party should work with mainstream Jewish community organisations, including the Jewish Labour Movement, to develop and implement education about antisemitism.
- The use of education or apology should only be used as mitigation where it is clear that this will have a demonstrable long-term impact on behaviour. Neither education nor an apology can be regarded as a suitable sanction in more serious cases. An effective apology is one that is given to and accepted by the victim, not given to or accepted by a party official.

Engagement with the Jewish community

- The Party should confirm publicly that it will seek to understand and engage with the Jewish community via its main representative groups, and not through fringe organisations and individuals who wish to obstruct or distract from the Party's efforts to tackle antisemitism. It should reconsider the appointments of party staff, whose record suggests that they will deepen the problem.

Communications

- Labour's media handling throughout the three and a half years of this scandal have served to exacerbate the mistrust between the Labour Party and the Jewish community and wider public alike. Bland, generic statements should give way to condemnation of specific harmful behaviours - and, where appropriate, condemnation of specific individuals.
- Citing a supposed number of offences as a small percentage of membership as a means to minimise the problem should cease. It is as inappropriate as anyone seeking to minimise the harmful impact of prejudice in this country by claiming that there is only a limited issue because the number of individuals actively prosecuted for hate crimes is only a tiny percentage of the entire UK population.

Leadership

- The antisemitism crisis of the last three and a half years would have been unthinkable under any previous Labour Party leader. A significant amount of the fault lies with Jeremy Corbyn, whose record of defending an antisemitic mural, attending events alongside members of antisemitic terrorist organisations, 'othering' British Jews whose views on Israel he disagreed with by saying they 'do not understand English irony', and attempting to dilute the internationally-accepted antisemitism definition, have unsurprisingly created a permissive culture around antisemitism. Equally, his equivocation on the severity of the situation and of individual cases, his public embrace of suspended members, and his dismissive response to legitimate questions from journalists, have fuelled the culture of disbelief and denial that has consistently deepened the crisis. From the reports of the whistleblowers, it would appear that those around Jeremy Corbyn, including senior staff such as Seumas Milne and Karie Murphy, also shoulder a significant share of the blame. They must take personal responsibility for resolving this crisis.

Process

- These changes must be sustained and enduring. There needs to be an agreed process to monitor the progress and implementation of these actions in the future.

We urge you to take this opportunity to turn the tide. The alternative is to leave Labour permanently damaged as an institutionally racist party. Our community and our country will not forgive any further failure.

In view of the public interest in this situation, we will be publishing this letter and making it available to the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Yours sincerely



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President