

## **Correspondence between JVL and Jon Lansman following his talk at Limmud in December 2018**

From: Jenny Manson Sent: 22 January 2019 14:12

To: laura.parker

Cc: jon.lansman; Leah Levane

Subject: Statements at the Limmud Festival

Dear Ms Parker,

We were disturbed to read in the Jewish Chronicle's account of last month's Limmud that;

Mr Lansman disappointed many in the audience when he did not echo calls for the whip to be removed from Labour MP Chris Williamson following a tweet supporting a petition against Islington Council's ban on a performance by the antisemitic Israeli musician Gilad Atzmon.

He doubted significant action would be taken since Mr Williamson had deleted the tweet and apparently apologised.

But he added, "we can't tolerate this continuing" and believed it was matter of time before the Derby North MP does something which results in a complaint being made which will then have to be investigated".

The report went on to say that Mr Akehurst said there was a case for proscribing the organisation Jewish Voice for Labour, which served "no useful purpose" and had been set up to delegitimise the Jewish Labour Movement. While Mr Lansman did not support closing down JVL, he was dismissive of it. "It is an organisation which is not just tiny but has no real connection with the Jewish community at all," he said. "It doesn't represent the Jewish community in a way that JLM clearly does represent the Labour wing of the Jewish community."

We take serious issue with that last statement for several well documented reasons which we would be happy to share. However, our current concern is that when Jon speaks, he is seen to be representing the views of Momentum. In our quite wide experience such a view of JVL is not held in local branches of Momentum in different parts of the country.

We would be grateful if you could confirm whether or not this was a true account of what Jon Lansman said and whether he considered that he was speaking on behalf of Momentum; and if he was not, whether he could be asked in future to confirm when he is speaking purely in a personal capacity.

Kind regards

Leah Levane and Jenny Manson

Co-chairs of JVL

From: Jon Lansman

Sent: 04 May 2019 18:12

To: Jenny Manson

Cc: Laura Parker

Subject: Re: Statements at the Limmud Festival

Dear Jenny and Leah

I am sorry to have taken so long to respond but I unfortunately get a very high volume of emails.

In short, I have spoken at Limmud on a number of occasions. When I do so, and indeed when I speak at other meetings on the subject of Israel/Palestine or antisemitism, I am not speaking on behalf of Momentum but in my personal capacity and the views I express are mine alone, although Momentum has adopted a policy on antisemitism and also has policy on Palestine (support for the composite at the last Labour Party conference and for the forthcoming demo on 11 May).

The remarks I made about Chris Williamson in response to questions has proved prescient. Unfortunately Chris's continuing activities did result in the party doing exactly what I predicted. However, as a member of the NEC and its disputes committee, it would be inappropriate for me to make any judgement on his actions, as you will note I managed to avoid in the comments you quote.

On the remarks I made about JVL, I don't think I said anything that I have not said directly to JVL. I defended the right of JVL to exist and against the characterisation of it by Luke Akehurst. However, I do not regard the existence of JVL as helpful to its primary purpose as I understand it - of defending the Labour Left's project - even if I agree with much of what many of its members think having been a longstanding member of JSG and signatory of JfJfP. Whilst there are of course plenty of dissident Jews in Britain, my observation is that neither the vast majority of individual members of JVL nor the organisation itself can really be said to be part of the Jewish community since the organisation was set up to oppose the conclusion that I'm afraid that every significant Jewish community organisation has arrived at about the Labour Party.

I do think it is possible to eradicate antisemitism in the Labour Party and to defend the Labour Left's project but not by denial of the problem within the Labour Party. The fact that

JVL insists on defending those who deny the problem and many of those who have clearly brought the Labour Party into disrepute (whether or not they are themselves antisemitic) means, I am afraid, that I regard JVL as part of the problem and not part of the solution to antisemitism in the Labour Party. And as a consequence of that, I'm afraid it ill-serves the cause of Palestinian rights too. You no doubt believe that you are expressing the views of progressive socialist Jews, and yes I am aware of many progressive socialist Jews who, after backing Jeremy Corbyn in two leadership elections and in the 2017 general election, are now considering leaving the party or have already done so, and JVL's existence has been partly responsible.

JVL behaves as if it speaks for Jewish socialists. It does not. And too many of its members self-define as "Jews" only to attack other Jews.

in socialism

Jon Lansman



**ALWAYS** with the  
**oppressed**

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**NEVER** with the  
**oppressor**

jvl.org.uk

28 May 2019

Dear Jon,

Thank you for your email of 4<sup>th</sup> May. Now the European elections are out of the way, here is our reply.

We do need to correct some of the misrepresentations you have been making publicly about Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL).

JVL is a network for Jewish members of the Labour Party, whose political priorities are: universal human rights and dignity; justice for all; freedom of expression; and democracy in the Labour Party. We aim to strengthen the Labour party in its opposition to all forms of racism including antisemitism and we stand for rights and justice for Jewish people everywhere and against wrongs and injustice to Palestinians and other oppressed people anywhere.

These are also principles which Labour's Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has been fighting for throughout his political career, which is why JVL gives him our full support. A Labour government led by Jeremy would, in our view, improve people's living standards, oppose all racism and antisemitism, and stand up for peace and international solidarity.

JVL totally opposes antisemitism. One of the reasons why we believe people should back the party is that it is led by a politician who is robust in his stand against antisemitism and has also been consistent in the support he gives to the Jewish community.

Antisemitism clearly still exists in Britain and within its political parties, including Labour, but it is demonstrably more prevalent on the right of the spectrum. Wherever antisemitism exists it needs to be combatted. False allegations of antisemitism however do not help Jewish people.

In those parts of the Jewish community which support Jeremy's values, there is concern about the extraordinary and unfounded allegations made that grossly exaggerate the degree of antisemitism within Labour. It is irresponsible to promote unjustifiable fears, scaring Jewish people that they face an existential threat from a Labour government. These allegations, so often unquestioned, are damaging the party's standing in our community and also in wider society.

Certainly, one key reason these exaggerated attacks are made on the Labour Party, and not on the Tories or the far right, is the Labour leadership's support for Palestinian human rights. You will surely agree that there is absolutely no contradiction between opposing antisemitism, as Jeremy and the leadership emphatically do, and challenging the State of Israel's abuse of the Palestinians.

It is helpful that you have clarified in your email that when you speak at meetings on the subject of Israel/Palestine or antisemitism, you are not speaking on behalf of Momentum. That then begs the question as to why so often no one speaking for Momentum as an organisation appears to be defending the party from the false allegations of antisemitism made against it.

On these issues indeed, Momentum often appears to be promoting a similar false agenda to Labour's opponents. This is disappointing because, of all organisations within Labour, Momentum's membership are known to be supportive of the leadership's politics, so the stance it takes in its public campaigning is especially damaging.

Even the right-wing Spectator magazine has recently carried an article that concludes that the grounds for labelling Jeremy an antisemite are non-existent.

We have copied into this email exchange the Vice Chairs, Secretary and National Coordinator of Momentum so that they are aware of the views of Jewish Labour members who support the leadership's politics.

JVL is not 'part of the problem' in the Labour Party, as you suggest. On the contrary, we are working hard for the election of a Labour government and our members, who are active in approximately half of all local constituency parties, make a serious contribution to this important endeavour.

Kind regards,

Leah Levane and Jenny Manson  
Co –chairs JVL