

Canvassers' Briefing

How to respond on the doorstep to claims of Labour antisemitism

Issue: "The Labour Party is deeply, institutionally antisemitic"

Response: You could ask people you canvass 'What proportion of Labour Party members do you think have had complaints of antisemitism made against them?'

In surveys the average 'guess' is over 30%. The actual figure is – 1/10th of 1%. That's right – the average voter has it wrong by a factor of over 300! You could ask them how they think that could have happened. Or you could tell them what seems to be the main reason – unremitting mainstream media bias. Voices presenting evidence against this narrative are not given airtime, or subjected to aggressive questioning. Could it be that they don't want the election of a Corbyn government with a progressive agenda?

Issue: "Labour supporters' criticisms of Israel and Zionism are antisemitic"

Response: Support for the struggle for justice for Palestinian people is often expressed through criticism of Zionism and Israel. This is not antisemitic and many Jewish people express such views. To Palestinian people today Israel and Zionism signify occupation, violence and being driven from their homes, whereas to many Jewish people Israel and Zionism signify refuge and a place of safety after centuries of persecution. There has been a significant conflation of criticism of Zionism with antisemitism, and misrepresentation of these issues in the press.

Issue: "Jeremy Corbyn and supporters befriend Palestinian terrorists"

Response: Jeremy Corbyn has always promoted peaceful settlement of disputes. You can't do that without talking to both sides. That's why the Blair government talked with McGuinness and Adams. Hamas and Hizbollah in the past have carried out atrocities, as did the IRA. But without talking there is no chance of a peaceful resolution.

Issue: "Corbyn supported an antisemitic mural"

Response: In 2012 in response to a Facebook post about the mural being removed from a wall in east London, Corbyn asked why and commented on the removal of an entirely different mural in New York. He did not look at the actual mural in question, which appeared only as a thumbnail image on his phone. He was making a general point about the removal of public art. We've all commented on things on Facebook without looking carefully at them. When it was suggested that the mural was antisemitic, he looked more carefully, then apologised unequivocally and acknowledged the offence that the mural had caused,.

Issue: "Jeremy Corbyn laid a wreath on the graves of terrorists"

Response: No he didn't. He laid a wreath on the graves of the 50 victims of a 1985 Israeli airstrike on the Palestinian Liberation Organisation HQ in Tunis (which was condemned by Thatcher). The claim that he was honouring men responsible for the Munich Olympics attack on Israeli athletes is a Daily Mail fraud. None of those are buried in Tunis, or even in Tunisia (and they weren't PLO members!).

For more background: see www.is.gd/JVLrebuttals