

How Labour's claim of countering antisemitism has resulted in a purge of Jews

Executive summary

We are making this submission as we believe that Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) members increasingly experience administrative persecution by the Labour Party (the Party) as a form of discrimination, targeted not just at our political beliefs but at the nexus of these beliefs with our Jewish identity.

Previous leaderships sought to hear from diverse Jewish perspectives. But the Party now limits its engagement with British Jews to groups who claim to represent "the Jewish community" but who in fact represent only one position within it. The Party is, in effect, collaborating with these groups to delegitimise Jewish dissent.

There are multiple views among Jews on religion and politics. There are splits between the religious groupings, there are varying degrees of secularism and there is full range of political views. Most important for today, there is a more than a century long difference of strongly held beliefs on Zionism, evolving more recently into many varied viewpoints. Among British Jews can be found every degree of progressive and conservative Zionism, anti-Zionism and indifference to Israel. Sometimes these differences are expressed with anger, more often through laughter and friendship.

The Party has marched into this complex scene of historic intra group wrangling and feuds and effectively taken sides. They have been enabled by over-simplistic media coverage that, in its sourcing and in the range of perspectives it airs, inaccurately presumes and conveys a monolithic consensus among British Jews.

In effect, Labour has aided and abetted efforts to define JVL members out of Britain's 'Jewish community'. No action has been taken against those who have repeatedly disputed, maligned or mocked the Jewishness of JVL

JVL has repeatedly warned both the EHRC and the Party about the climate of hostility being built up and directed against us. This is experienced as discrimination, victimisation and harassment. Our Jewish members do not feel safe in the Party and this is experienced agonisingly like the persecution our families have experienced over centuries. Here is an excerpt from our [paper on antisemitic misconduct](#), ignored by the Party:

Antisemitism is a form of racism. It consists in prejudice, hostility or hatred towards Jews as Jews. It may take the form of denial of rights; direct, indirect or institutional discrimination; prejudice-based behaviour; verbal or written statements; or violence. Such manifestations draw on stereotypes – characteristics which all Jews are presumed to share.

The disputes within Labour in the years since Jeremy Corbyn was elected as leader in 2015 have driven a wedge between different parts of the many Jewish Communities. There was, to be sure, infighting before this period, but it is novel for the majority of Jews in the UK to be informed that we are represented by the Board of Deputies (BOD) and, for those on the left, by the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM). The BOD represents less than a third of Jews in the UK by most estimates. The criteria for joining the JLM include promoting the centrality of Israel in Jewish life.

JVL is a vibrant political association **led by Jewish Labour members**. We are a proud product of, and participant in, a rich British and, indeed, universalist Jewish radical tradition, for freedom and justice for all. We are committed to the struggle against all racism, including antisemitism, and for freedom and justice for all, including the Palestinian people. While all JVL members oppose the current treatment of Palestinians, not all are opposed to Zionism.

JVL represents some 350 Jewish Labour Party members. All JVL officers and committee members are Jewish Labour members. JVL also has approximately 800 non-Jewish Party 'solidarity' members and a small number of Jewish 'supporters', many of who have left the Party in despair.

The Labour Party represents a wide spectrum of socialist and social democratic opinion. As so often in its Party's history, the battle has in recent years been fierce between what is largely seen as its left and right wings, latterly between those who shared Corbyn's values and policies and those who for varying reasons opposed his leadership from the very moment he became favourite to win the Leadership contest in September 2015.

But a new feature is that the Labour Party is targeting those who question its interpretation of antisemitism and in particular its adoption of one particularly, contested definition of antisemitism, in effect **determining as antisemitic, and worthy of expulsion, disagreement over the *methods* used for combating antisemitism**. One frequent charge cited in investigations of members for antisemitism is that of undermining "the Party's ability to campaign against racism"; so, any such questioning brings culpability in its wake.

Labour is purging Jews from the Party. There have been at least 40 investigations of *Jews* for *antisemitism*. As one of our officers protested:

everyone raised in a Jewish family setting – hugely diverse though these are — grows up knowing what antisemitism is in the depth of their being and we all carry the fear of it with us through our lives. Knowing Jewishness from the inside as I do, I can honestly say that the idea of Jews being accused of antisemitism virtually en masse is something I cannot get my head round. But I don't know of any precedent in which a group of Jews has been subjected to institutional accusations of antisemitism.

This report spells out the ways in which this calumny has escalated:

- The Party has ignored complaints made by Jews who are members of JVL of antisemitism shown to them, including other forms of bullying;
- In failing to consult JVL with regard to the membership of the Advisory Board recommended by the EHRC, even as it pledged to consult Jewish stakeholders, the Party has in effect decided that we aren't a Jewish community, and emboldened those actors within British Jewry that have denied or ridiculed our Jewish identity;
- There is considerable evidence that Jewish members have been disproportionately targeted with investigation for antisemitism. It appears that as a population share, almost five times more Jewish than non-Jewish Labour members have faced complaints of antisemitism which have been investigated. We estimate that Jewish JVL members have been subject to actioned antisemitism complaints at a rate 20 times greater than non-Jewish Labour members;
- The assumption of disciplinary investigations is that all Jews are Zionists and/or that anti-Zionists are not proper Jews and indeed are antisemitic, delegitimising an entire swathe of Jewish opinion and tradition;
- Targeting JVL members in positions of power within the Party with bizarre allegations of antisemitism, based on demands for justice for others accused;
- Calls for proscription: an MP, an elected agent of the Party, has called for JVL to be proscribed, evidently because of our views, expressed as Jewish members, about antisemitism within the Party;
- Jewish members who disagree with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, the EHRC's findings, and/or the Party's treatment of Jeremy Corbyn are disciplined if they voice their opinions publicly at local meetings in their constituencies;
- Training by a Zionist organisation, the JLM, whose views are hostile to Corbyn, Corbyn's supporters and JVL, is now mandatory for any Labour Party elected officer and recommended for all Labour Party members;
- JVL education on antisemitism is banned to the extent that constituencies or branches that want to invite the JVL team of educationalists to deliver a session are disciplined; this has been coupled by the Party discouraging affiliations to JVL.

There are ten attachments which document these claims.

Annex 1 Diana Neslen's story: The harrying of an older Jewish woman

Annex 2 Stephen Mark's story: The singling out of a Jewish NCC member

Annex 3 Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi's story: How misrepresenting comments led to suspension

Annex 4 Proscription in Starmer's Labour Party

Annex 5 The creation of an unrepresentative Advisory Board

Annex 6 Complaints by JVL members that have been ignored

Annex 7 The disproportionate targeting of left-wing Jewish Party members

Annex 8 Our Jewish identities under attack

Annex 9 The banning of JVL's education programme

Annex 10 The impact of the General Secretary's directives on left-wing Jews

We request interested organisations such as the EHRC, the Forde Inquiry and the Runnymede Trust to put pressure on the Labour Party to take seriously its responsibilities as an avowed anti-racist political party and to respect the full range of political views amongst its Jewish members. This JVL review is being sent to academic organisations with special knowledge of antisemitism. It is time the issues we raise were given the serious attention they deserve.