

“Taking Antisemitism Seriously”

During the election debate on ITV on 19 November 2019, Jeremy Corbyn made this claim:

Antisemitism is an absolute evil and scourge within our society. Racism in any form is a scourge in our society. I have taken action in my party, where anyone who has committed any antisemitic acts or made any antisemitic statements, they are either suspended or expelled from the party and we've investigated every single case. We do take this very, very seriously indeed.

Despite this, Labour is still backing a number of individuals with a track record of either making antisemitic comments, sharing antisemitic material or perpetuating antisemitic stereotypes.

The following candidates have all acted in a way that contravenes the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism as adopted by the Labour national executive committee (NEC) in September 2018.¹

Former Labour Riverside MP Dame Louise Ellman DBE – who resigned from the party last month – said: “I joined the Labour Party 55 years ago because I believed in its values. I left it because under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, racism against Jewish people has become mainstream.

“Jeremy Corbyn repeatedly states that he is doing everything he can to remove antisemitism inside the Labour Party.

“But the facts show otherwise. A number of Labour parliamentary candidates have now been exposed for their hurtful remarks against Jewish people, or for spreading vile conspiracy theories. Jewish members like me have been driven out.

“If the party is to regain any credibility as an anti-racist party it must immediately suspend all candidates who have breached IHRA guidelines. That is the least it can do to recognise the depths to which it has plunged.”

Mainstream Chairman Ian Austin said: “Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell repeatedly say that anti-Jewish racism inside Labour has been exaggerated, and that everything possible is being done to remove it.

“These findings prove that this is a simple lie. Corbyn and McDonnell have let Labour become a home for racists. When the Conservatives have identified people alleged to have made anti-Jewish statements, they have swiftly blocked them from standing.

“Labour must withdraw its support for these candidates immediately.”

¹ <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>

Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs)

1. Alana Bates, St Ives

IHRA breach: *Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis; 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.*

- In 2018, Alana Bates "liked" a Facebook image of a sign reading "Apartheid: it wasn't okay in South Africa. It wasn't okay in Nazi Germany. Why is it okay in Palestine". The image was posted on the Cornwall Friends of Palestine Facebook page with the caption "AS [*short for antisemitism] NO!!!."²
- Bates performs with a band which recorded a song and music video called "From the River to the Sea", which calls for the destruction of Israel.³ Lyrics include, "Justice should not have to wait, Israel's an apartheid state, Justice should not have to wait, Israel is a racist state".

2. Apsana Begum, Poplar and Limehouse

IHRA breach: *Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, 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; Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.*

- In 2014, after Tel Aviv university awarded a prize to Tony Blair, Apsana Begum described the university as one that was "offering scholarships to students for spreading Zionist propaganda".⁴
- In 2017, Begum shared a Facebook post which stated that Saudi Arabia's decision to not allow some Qatari pilgrims to enter Mecca was "inspired by their Zionist masters".⁵

3. Lisa Forbes, Peterborough

IHRA breach: *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; Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, 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.*

2 <https://www.facebook.com/cornwallfriendsofpalestine/photos/a.973147772826967/1198934870248255/?type=3&permPage=1>

3 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/politics/10313504/labour-anti-semitism-storm-candidate-filmed-singing-destruction-israel/>

4 <https://www.theredroar.com/2019/03/new-london-labour-official-shared-zionist-masters-post/>

5 <https://www.theredroar.com/2019/03/new-london-labour-official-shared-zionist-masters-post/>

- Lisa Forbes is a current Member of Parliament, having won a 2019 by-election.
- In 2018, Lisa Forbes signed a letter to Labour’s National Executive Committee opposing the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. The letter stated that adopting the definition would prevent Israel being boycotted, and that a policy of boycott was necessary as Israel had not been a democracy and had enforced a system of apartheid in the West Bank.
- The letter also stated that adopting the definition would prevent Israel from being labelled a racist endeavour. Labelling Israel as such was legitimate, the letter said, because it “[c]laiming that the State of Israel is a racist endeavour is not the same as denying Jewish people the right to self-determination.”
- The letter went on to claim that Israel was “created through the expulsion and killing of members of one ethnic group to make room for another”, that this remained Israeli policy, and there was “ongoing ethnic cleansing” in Israel.⁶
- In 2014, Forbes responded to a Facebook post which stated that David Cameron was using ISIS in order to try to create a civil war in the UK; and there was “evidence in hand of the funding and the creation of such extremists by the CIA and Mosad [sic]”. Forbes posted “I have enjoyed reading this thread so much”.⁷
- In 2019, Forbes ‘liked’ a Facebook post that accused Theresa May of having a “Zionist Slave Masters agenda”.⁸

4. Rebecca Jenkins, Redditch

***IHRA breach:** Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, 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.*

- In 2018, Rebecca Jenkins wrote “Hear hear!” in response to the words ‘All we gotta do is stand up and it’s game over’ superimposed over a picture of an antisemitic mural. This was a mural that Jeremy Corbyn had previously defended online and yet later acknowledged was “deeply disturbing and antisemitic”.

5. Afzal Khan, Manchester Gorton

***IHRA breach:** Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, 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.*

6 <https://lettertolabournec.wordpress.com/>

7 Image in possession of author.

8 <https://www.bod.org.uk/joint-statement-on-labours-peterborough-election-candidate-lisa-forbes-2/>

- Afzal Khan is a current MP, having been elected in 2017, and serves as a Shadow Immigration Minister.
- In 2015, Afzal Khan shared a Facebook post which referred to an “Israel-British-Swiss-Rothschilds crime syndicate” and “mass murdering Rothschilds Israeli mafia criminal liars”.⁹
- In 2015, Afzal Khan shared a Facebook post which said that the “Israeli Zionist Government is a disgrace to humanity” and suggested Israel only existed because it had stolen land.¹⁰

6. Kate Linnegar, North Swindon

IHRA breach: *Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust; Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis; Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, 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; Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.*

- In 2016, Kate Linnegar posted a link to Facebook of an interview with Norman Finkelstein which accused certain Labour MPs of being “Holocaust-mongers”.¹¹
- In 2016, Linnegar ‘liked’ a Facebook post entitled ‘How Israel lobby manufactured UK Labour Party’s anti-Semitism crisis’.¹²
- In 2016, Linnegar ‘liked’ a Facebook post which described the Jewish State as a ‘so-called country’.¹³
- In 2016, Linnegar ‘liked’ a Facebook post which compared Israel to Hitler.¹⁴

7. Ali Milani, Uxbridge and South Ruislip

IHRA breach: *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; Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.*

9 https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/uk-england-manchester-49130905?__twitter_impression=true

10 <https://twitter.com/GnasherJew/status/1154815076894986240>

11 <https://order-order.com/2018/06/21/labour-parliamentary-candidate-posted-holocaust-mongers-defended-jackie-walker/>

12 <https://order-order.com/2019/04/04/labour-ppc-liked-post-claiming-israel-lobby-manufactured-labour-anti-semitism-crisis/>

13 <https://order-order.com/2019/04/04/labour-ppc-liked-post-claiming-israel-lobby-manufactured-labour-anti-semitism-crisis/>

14 <https://order-order.com/2019/04/04/labour-ppc-liked-post-claiming-israel-lobby-manufactured-labour-anti-semitism-crisis/>

- Ali Milani has posted on social media that Israel “has no right to exist” and was “built on ethnic cleansing and colonialism”. He then stated that “[o]ppression is something your people should know about”.¹⁵
- In 2012, Milani tweeted that “[i]t’ll cost u a pound #jew”, perpetuating the stereotype that Jews are excessively careful with their finances.¹⁶
- In a 2015 interview with Press TV, Milani encouraged viewers not to regard the options of either “non-violent economic resistance” or “armed resistance” against Israel as binary, implying that “armed resistance” was indeed a legitimate course of action.¹⁷
- Milani also posted that his opinion “is and will forever be” that the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 9/11 were a “false flag” operation that the US government was aware of before time.¹⁸

8. Dinah Mulholland, Ceredigion

IHRA breach: *Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation; 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.*

- In 2018, Dinah Mulholland signed the aforementioned letter to Labour’s National Executive Committee opposing the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism (see Lisa Forbes entry).

9. Zarah Sultana, Coventry South

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

- In 2015, Zarah Sultana tweeted that the outgoing vice president of the National Union of Students (NUS) should move to Israel after he criticised those calling for a boycott of the country.

15 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/revealed-ali-milani-labour-candidate-for-boris-johnson-s-seat-in-2015-press-tv-appearance-1.486891>

16 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/labour-candidate-ali-milani-in-new-antisemitic-row-65s05pc9l?region=global>

17 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/revealed-ali-milani-labour-candidate-for-boris-johnson-s-seat-in-2015-press-tv-appearance-1.486891>

18 <https://order-order.com/2019/07/30/labours-anti-boris-candidate-ali-milani-9-11-truther/>

- Sultana also tweeted that this same individual did not "serve Israel as well as [he] would've liked" during his time at the NUS.¹⁹
- Sultana suggested on social media that only Jewish students "on Bibi's paycheque" would find it easy to be supportive of Israel.
- In a Facebook comment, Sultana posted that she supported Palestinian "violent resistance" against Israel.²⁰
- Sultana has also compared Israel to an apartheid state and accused it of "ethnic cleansing" and "war crimes".

10. Louise Webberley, Totnes

IHRA breach: Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, 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.

- Louise Webberley engaged with a Facebook post alleging that "the Israeli state is proven to be interfering in UK politics far beyond anything convenient scapegoat Russia is allegedly doing, but nobody wants to risk upsetting them because they are judged to be so powerful." Webberley responded "[c]ompletely agree!"²¹
- In 2018, Webberley shared a Facebook post suggesting that criticisms of Corbyn was because he was "opposed to the murderous apartheid regime in Israel".
- In 2018, she also shared a conspiracy theory on Facebook that Israel was paying "Labour insiders" to undermine Corbyn, describing it as "not shocking, sadly!!!!!"

Conclusion

Labour cannot claim to be taking antisemitism seriously while simultaneously supporting a host of candidates who have breached the Labour NEC's own adopted guidelines on antisemitism.

While some of the candidates listed above have apologised for their actions, it is unlikely that the Labour party would continue to support PPCs who made racist comments or shared racist content about black people, Muslims, or any other ethnic minorities.

Antisemitism is just as pernicious as other forms of racism. If Labour is truly committed to combating racism, it must withdraw its support for these PPCs immediately.

¹⁹ <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/labour-s-coventry-south-candidate-taunted-nus-vice-president-over-israel-1.493198?highlight=zarah+sultana>

²⁰ <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/exclusive-labour-parliamentary-candidate-said-she-would-celebrate-deaths-of-blair-netanyahu-1.491027>

²¹ Image in possession of author.

ends