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# THE LABOUR INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM

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## To the chair of the inquiry, Shami Chakrabarti

I am writing to you to formally submit evidence to this inquiry as a British Jew, an active member of the Jewish community and someone who has been affected deeply by the recent and still ongoing opprobrium from Party members about Jews.

My evidence starts in October 2015. I attended a Palestinian Return Centre meeting at Parliament. At this event I watched Labour's most senior MP, Sir Gerald Kaufman, publicly state that "Jews paid blood money to the British government to obfuscate and lie for the benefit of Jews in the State of Israel." This was a mendacious lie founded on a classic form of Jew hatred, that being Jews having unparalleled wealth which they used to manipulate governments and authorities to their advantage and against the greater good. Not only did this elicit howls of appreciation from the audience (inciting this racist narrative) but also was applauded by another Labour MP, Andy Slaughter, who stated that he agreed with every word. At this meeting other antisemitic stories were aired such as Jews owning the gold of Fort Knox and Israelis being child murderers and harvesting organs of children for medical use. Blood libels that I thought could never be heard in the heart of our parliament.

At this point I wrote to the Labour Party: Jeremy Corbyn, Rosie Winterton and John Mann (in his capacity as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism). I declared that I had experienced antisemitism first hand. Labour's official response: "Sir Gerald could apologise if he wished to". He never did. Matter closed.

Since then I have written hundreds of polite emails to the Party every time antisemitic activity has reared its ugly head in the Party, whether that be MPs, councillors, activists, members, union leaders or high profile supporters.

The Party has replied twice to my emails. Despite me telling the recipients how hurt, offended and intimidated I feel at every new antisemitic revelation and despite the fact that my family are genuinely upset and in fear. **My 10 year old daughter** feels ashamed of her Judaism. She is aware of Jew Hate through the media and is confused when she hears a politician talking about the Jewish State being “transported” to resolve the differences between Israel and its neighbours or “Israel being racist”. She is a kid who visits her family and friends in Tel Aviv but now feels ashamed because of these vicious untruths. **My 19 year old daughter** is at university. She wears an “I ♥ Tel Aviv” tee-shirt. But she knows not to get involved in politics with some students who will intimidate her quoting “ Hamas as friends”. This is the same Hamas who, in their charter “demand the extermination of all Jews”. She accepts that her social media is invaded with invites to PSC and BDS events where she hears antisemitic canards freely bandied around as truths and has to explain to her friends that this is not the Israel she loves. **My wife** stopped watching the news because she found the continuous stream of antisemitic revelations in Labour too much to cope with. She has begun to talk about leaving the UK. She believes there is no future for Jews in the UK when a major political party can openly speak with opprobrium against Israel and Jews. Labour voting Jewish friends have resigned their membership. I met **a dear friend** outside the gates of our synagogue (where I was doing my security duty, as necessary at every Jewish venue). Her mother, 80 years old and a lifelong Labour activist and ex councillor looked at me and said how sorry she was for the hatred in Labour towards Jews. She felt responsible. Wrong though that responsibility was, her grief at something she had loved all of her life turning against her and her community was heartbreaking. I watched our Jewish representatives, **The Board of Deputies**, meet with Jeremy Corbyn. I know these representatives. They are decent upstanding people. Their disappointment in Jeremy’s engagement was obvious. Jeremy’s intransigence towards the issue created even greater dismay for the community. It was compounded by his friendship towards Jews latest persecutors, Hamas; his friendship with a Holocaust denier; his platforming with Jewish hate speakers; his inability to say the word “*Israel*” in a speech to Labour friends of Israel; his continued support of anti Israel organisations such PSC and Stop the War; his reluctance to deal with antisemitism in general. Jeremy Corbyn’s silence as the mainstream Labour vessel

started to rock with the tidal wave of bigotry towards Jews and that which they hold precious was shocking. This was the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition letting racism rage..

We, as Jews, have been hurt, offended and intimidated. We now live in fear. This is the sentiment of the vast majority of Jews. Not the tiny sample who are unquestioningly loyal to Labour and call antisemitism a smear campaign.

When Dianne Abbott appeared on BBC and stated that "Labour did not have an antisemitism problem" despite the Chief Rabbi, the Board of Deputies, the Campaign Against Antisemitism and the Chair of the All Party Government against Antisemitism and almost all Jews saying otherwise, she implied that Jews were too stupid to know what constituted antisemitism or were simply liars. Clearly she felt that MacPherson did not apply to Jews (unlike her colleagues John MacDonnell and Baroness Royall who both were clear that this was a valid test of antisemitism as with any other form of racism). Somehow Dianne Abbott thought that hate against Jews was an exception. Whatever Jews felt before this interview, she compounded all the negative and fearful emotion that Jews were experiencing.

Almost every Jew I know, and I know thousands, from every walk of life, from every different background, of every age and every political persuasion consider the future bleak for Jews in the UK, much because of the behaviours I have just outlined. We see historical similarities and this time Jews will not wait to see how this plays out. All across Europe Jews are fleeing to the only place they feel safe, Israel.

I met a senior representative of the Israeli government. She asked me, "Are you ok? We worry about you in Britain". She told me how Israel understands its neighbours and the feelings towards Israelis. It has many ways to defend itself and does so in a fully committed way to its people (all Israelis of course, all races and religions). But in Britain we are at whim of those who don't care so much. Being such a small minority, Jews in the UK may not be able to defend themselves. Israelis, despite their challenges think we are truly on the front line; they think British Jews are the real ones under threat.

Labour can address this. Labour can once again be the best friends to Jews, Israelis and Zionists. We are the most natural of bed fellows. Our histories of equality, industry and social inspiration should make us the proudest of friends. Our battles against racist bigotry put us on the same path. Cable Street was the Socialists and the Jews. On the 30<sup>th</sup> May

2016 the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the world's most authoritative organisation on antisemitism agreed to formally adopt the Working Definition of antisemitism. Here is the press release:

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopts a working definition of antisemitism on 26 May.

The consensus decision on the [adopted decision](#) was reached after in-depth discussion of the issue during the IHRA Plenary meetings held in Bucharest from 23-26 May.

[IHRA Chair](#), Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu, stated:

“All IHRA Member Countries share concern that incidents of antisemitism are steadily rising and agree that IHRA’s Member Countries and indeed IHRA’s experts need political tools with which to fight this scourge. IHRA’s 31 member countries- 24 of which are EU member countries- are committed to the [Stockholm Declaration](#) and thereby to fighting the evil of antisemitism through coordinated international political action.”

The IHRA Chair continued: “By adopting this working definition, the IHRA is setting an example of responsible conduct for other international fora and hopes to inspire them also to take action on a legally binding working definition.”

The Chair underlined the fact that as a body of [31 Member Countries](#), [ten Observer Countries](#), and [seven international partner organisations](#), with a unique mandate to focus on education, research and remembrance of the Holocaust, the IHRA was the appropriate body to adopt a working definition of antisemitism. The IHRA Chair noted the fundamental role that the German OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office played in facilitating the adoption of the working definition.

Mark Weitzman, Chair of the IHRA Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial, which proposed the adoption of the definition in 2015, said: “In order to begin to address the problem of antisemitism, there must be clarity about what antisemitism actually is. This is not a simple question. The [adopted working definition](#) helps provide guidance in answer to this challenging question. Crucially, the definition adopted by the IHRA is endorsed by experts, is relevant and is of practical applicability. Together with the IHRA adopted [Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion](#), the working definition of antisemitism provides another tool in the IHRA tool kit for combatting antisemitism.”

**This inquiry must adopt the same definition. This is it in full:**

Bucharest, 26 May 2016

In the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration that states: “With humanity still scarred by ...antisemitism and xenophobia the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils” the committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial called the IHRA Plenary in Budapest 2015 to adopt the following working definition of antisemitism.

On 26 May 2016, the Plenary in Bucharest decided to:

To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, 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.

□ Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.

□ Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).

Adopt the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

□ 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.

□ Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

□ Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.

□ Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

□ Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

**Antisemitic acts are criminal** when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

**Criminal acts are antisemitic** when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

**Antisemitic discrimination** is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

Finally, I implore this inquiry to hold true to this definition, hold true to its values and that of a decent political party where these criminal antisemitic acts and behaviours are banished along with all those who hold these despicable views. They have no place in the Labour Party. They never did and they never will do. Make me, my family, my friends and my community feel that Jews are welcomed by, not hated by the Labour Party.

SINCERELY,

STEPHEN SPENCER RYDE

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