

Chakrabarti report refutes claims of rampant anti-Semitism in British Labour Party

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A recent report on anti-Semitism and racism in the Labour Party, commissioned by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, concluded that the party “is not overrun by anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or other forms of racism.”

It placed anti-Semitism in the wider context of racism not anti-Zionism, thereby refusing to equate criticism of the Israeli state with anti-Semitism.

It stated that there is, however, “too much clear evidence (going back some years) of minority hateful or ignorant attitudes” and an “occasionally toxic atmosphere” that “is in danger of shutting down free speech within the Party rather than facilitating it.”

The report was published by Shami Chakrabarti, a human rights lawyer and former director of human rights organisation, Liberty. It made a number of recommendations for tackling allegations of racism, including procedures for investigating such claims in accordance with principles of natural justice and proportionality, instead of summary suspension based on accusations, a moratorium on new disciplinary cases, and a statute of limitation on old claims.

In so doing, she implicitly rejected the media-led hysteria based on anonymous claims and without evidence, as well as the trawling of old social media postings by low-ranking members, that the Labour Party is a hotbed of anti-Semitism.

This charge has played a key role in the right-wing putsch attempt by Labour MPs, working in cahoots with the Conservative Party, the pro-Conservative media, the military-intelligence apparatus in Britain and the United States, and pro-Israel groups, to remove Corbyn as party leader.

It is part of a broader attempt on the part of the financial elite to overturn June’s referendum result to leave the European Union. The re-fashioning of the Labour Party is their preferred means to achieve this,

with the aim of shifting politics sharply to the right. These forces are vehemently opposed to the anti-austerity and anti-war sentiments of those who voted for Corbyn, against his right-wing opponents, as Labour leader last September.

According to numerous Labour MP’s—all hostile to Corbyn—and media reports, especially in the *Guardian*—anti-Semitism had only become a problem since his election as leader last September. The charge was made that all criticism of the Israeli state and its suppression of the Palestinians are a form of anti-Semitism.

For example, last February, a *Daily Telegraph* article headlined “Is the Labour Party’s problem with racism beyond repair?” stated that the reports of anti-Semitism “are reflective of a perpetuation – and tolerance of – anti-Semitism that starts at the top of the Labour Party, then steadily works its way down. And are they no longer anathema to Labour or its heritage. Far from it. Anti-Semitism is now firmly embedded in the Labour party’s DNA.”

Similarly, Jonathan Freedland wrote in the *Guardian*, which has been at the forefront of the campaign to oust Corbyn, “Thanks to Corbyn, the Labour party is expanding, attracting many leftists who would previously have rejected it or been rejected by it. Among those are people with hostile views of Jews.”

Alex Chalmers, who had been an intern in the Israel advocacy and lobby group BICOM, resigned from the chair of the Oxford University Labour Club (OULC) alleging anti-Semitism. His resignation generated a media storm about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party and OULC.

Yet in his resignation statement, Chalmers made it clear that his resignation had nothing to do with anti-Semitism but was because of the OULC’s decision “to

endorse Israel Apartheid Week.”

Last May, Corbyn agreed to the suspension of his long-time ally, former London Mayor Ken Livingstone, from the party. This was in response to Livingstone speaking out against the suspension, the previous day, of Naz Shah, Labour MP for Bradford West, after she was accused of anti-Semitism in social media posts.

Livingstone’s remarks on BBC radio particularly incensed the Blairite coup organisers. He had stated, somewhat carelessly, “Let’s remember, when Hitler won his election in 1932 [sic] his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism. [He then] went mad and ending up killing 6 million Jews.”

It is however, a matter of historical record that after Hitler came to power, significant sections of the Zionist movement in Germany sought an accommodation with the Nazi regime, which did agree to the transfer of some Jews to Palestine.

Instead of opposing and exposing the undemocratic methods of the right-wing plotters who are seeking to remove him and their broader political agenda, once again Corbyn capitulated. He agreed immediately to the suspension of Shah, Livingstone and numerous others, and set up an inquiry into racism in the Labour Party to be headed by Chakrabarti.

Significantly, the report found that many of the accusations of anti-Semitism relate to statements made before Corbyn became leader. It should be pointed out that the Labour Party’s 2010 leadership contest was between two people of Jewish origin, while the polls show that the percentage of people in the UK that hold anti-Semitic views is small and has remained constant at around 7 percent.

Corbyn welcomed the report’s findings and pledged to implement its recommendations.

Far from calming tensions, the findings have added to the already “toxic atmosphere.” It has met with a vitriolic response from some Jewish community leaders and the pro-Israel lobby, who called it a “whitewash.” They are incensed because it did not confirm their accusations of rampant anti-Semitism.

Chakrabarti was accused of bias, after announcing on the day she was asked to lead the inquiry, that she had joined the Labour Party to gain members’ “trust and confidence.” Ephraim Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi said the “credibility of her report lies in tatters” after the

announcement that she was the only person on the Labour Honours list recommended for a peerage.

The Chakrabarti report in effect confirmed the inquiry into anti-Semitism at OULC, led by her deputy Lady Royall.

Royall wrote on the website of the Jewish Labour Movement (the British wing of the Israeli Labour Party and an affiliate of the World Zionist Organisation), “I know that you will share my disappointment and frustration that the main headline coming out of my inquiry is that there is no institutional anti-Semitism in Oxford University Labour Club” [emphasis added].

In acknowledging this, Royall inadvertently revealed that the real issue was not anti-Semitism but opposition of many, including Labour members, to Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians.

Dave Rich, Deputy Director of Communications for the Community Security Trust, a charity for the defence of the Jewish community in Britain, which has a pro-Israel agenda focusing on combating the Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement, likewise acknowledged this in a letter to the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz*.

He wrote, “Neither report [Chakrabarti and Royall] truly tackled the underlying question of whether the anti-Semitism in the party is a product of the obsessive mania over Israel that has gripped Corbyn’s part of the left for years.”

His remarks confirm that the witch-hunt over anti-Semitism is part of a broader campaign to override the widespread hostility to Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians, and its role as policeman for US and British imperialism’s interests in the Middle East.



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