

# Tory-Blairite gangup in witch hunt over alleged UK Labour anti-Semitism

Jean Shaoul  
24 April 2018

The debate in the House of Commons on April 17 on anti-Semitism was planned as a co-ordinated attack on Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn by the party's right wing in alliance with the Conservative government.

After weeks of denouncing anyone raising the politically motivated character of the attack on Corbyn as just another form of anti-Semitism, Tory and Blairite MPs took turns in portraying him as an anti-Semite, amid an avalanche of slanders, unsubstantiated allegations—some unbelievable—and misinformation.

Its political purpose was underscored by the government tabling the debate immediately after a motion on the US-led air strikes on Syria and Prime Minister Theresa May's refusal to recall parliament beforehand.

Some 54 Labour MPs abstained on a whipped vote on Corbyn's proposal that parliament "take back control" of military matters by passing a Military Powers Act requiring the government to seek approval before launching military action overseas.

Having lined up with the Tory war drive in the Middle East, the Blairites did the same in launching yet another vicious attack on Corbyn's supporters and the "left" more broadly.

Opening the debate, Conservative government Communities Secretary Sajid Javid accused Corbyn of displaying a "worrying lack of leadership and moral clarity" on anti-Semitism.

He claimed there had been 1,346 anti-Semitic "incidents" in Britain in 2017, the highest on record, citing the Community Security Trust. This is an organisation whose leadership and funding were neither transparent nor accountable, according to a columnist in the *Jewish Chronicle*. Javid provided no information about the nature, sources or verification of the incidents. Nor did he explain how and why Corbyn should be held accountable for these.

He then drew attention to Britain's adoption of the

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA's) non-legally binding working definition of anti-Semitism in December 2016. This redefinition is specifically aimed at equating criticism of the State of Israel, especially its treatment of the Palestinians, with anti-Semitism.

Targeting anti-Zionist positions held by the left, Javid declared that criticisms of the Israeli government were simply "a mask for anti-Jewish, racist sentiment."

This paved the way for several MPs to focus on Corbyn's support for the Palestinians and his appearances on platforms with speakers from the militant bourgeois nationalist Islamist groups, Palestinian Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah, in which he urged a negotiated settlement, as evidence of his own anti-Semitism.

Labour MP John Mann, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism, used parliamentary privilege to accuse the pro-Corbyn group of being involved in a campaign against his family. Momentum, he said, was "explicitly targeting Jewish members of the Parliamentary Labour Party because they are Jewish" and implied that it was responsible for his wife receiving a "dead bird through the post" from "a Labour Marxist anti-Semite" and being "threatened with rape" by another "leftist anti-Semite." He presented no evidence for his serious allegations. It should be noted that Momentum's founder, Jon Lansman, is Jewish.

Roger Dyas-Elliott was given a restraining order for posting the dead bird to Mann's wife in 2012—three years before Momentum was founded and before Corbyn's first run for Labour leadership. According to the *Workshop Guardian*, "Dyas-Elliott said that he sent the package because he was 'bitter' after his application to run as a Labour councillor was declined by the group's Bassetlaw District Applications Panel", which included Mann's wife, "due to his 'unkempt appearance'."

It is not clear if charges have been sought against any

individual for the rape threat.

Labour MP Luciana Berger reported that she had been subjected to a torrent of anti-Semitic abuse ever since she had been a student. But she had to acknowledge that the four people convicted since 2013 for the anti-Semitic abuse and harassment directed at her, three of whom had been imprisoned, were from the far right.

Conservative MPs again and again name-checked Corbyn's Blairite opponents for their "brave stand" against Labour's anti-Semitism. So naked was the targeting of Corbyn that Tory Andrew Percy was rebuked by the deputy speaker chairing the debate for referring to Corbyn directly as "you" in defiance of protocol.

Corbyn sat through much of this diatribe, but gave the right of reply to Diane Abbott, the shadow home secretary. Abbott duly denied that the speeches against Labour and Corbyn concealed a broader political motive and said that the party was doing everything it could to stamp out anti-Semitism.

This grovelling before a right-wing cabal achieved nothing, as she was barracked to such a degree that the deputy speaker repeatedly had to uphold her right to speak.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd concluded the debate by claiming that the speeches "were not in any way anti-Labour," adding in words dripping with hypocrisy, "Labour is a noble and honourable party and it is absolutely wrong that this corner of anti-Semitism has been allowed to flourish. [Corbyn] has an obligation to take action. We expect nothing less."

No one would guess that this apparently rampantly anti-Semitic party held a leadership contest in 2010 between two people of Jewish origin.

These MPs would have you believe that British Jews face a situation akin to Hitler's Germany, when—according to the polls—anti-Semitism in Britain has remained consistently at around 7 percent, among the lowest in Europe.

In 2016, Corbyn commissioned a report into anti-Semitism chaired by Shami Chakrabarti, a human rights lawyer and former director of the human rights organisation Liberty, that—hardly surprisingly—concluded that the Labour Party "is not overrun by anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or other forms of racism."

At the Labour Party's annual conference last September, delegates backed a resolution that defined anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination as "conduct prejudicial to the party."

Charges of anti-Semitism are a cover for the real

political agenda of Corbyn's opponents:

- To shift Labour's foreign policy even further to the right—in line with Trump's aggressive policies in the Middle East, aimed at the Assad regime in Syria and its backers Russia and Iran, in which Israel plays a key role.
- To criminalise the left by equating all criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.
- To further the ongoing campaign to discredit Corbyn to the benefit of the Tories and hopefully to remove him as Labour leader.

The sickening hypocrisy involved is epitomised by Israel's repeatedly used live fire and tear gas against unarmed Palestinians in Gaza, protesting to demand their right of return to their ancestral homes in Palestine from which their parents and grandparents fled or were driven out after the UN decision to partition Palestine in 1947. Israel's army has killed more than 30 Palestinians and seriously injured hundreds since the start of the March of Return rallies that began on March 30. None of the MPs involved in the attack on Corbyn has a word of criticism for what is, by definition, an anti-Semitic attack directed against Arab men, women and children.

The anti-Semitism furore comes just weeks before local elections in which the Conservatives' unpopularity means they face losing not just marginal boroughs like Barnet, but, in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire, even traditional strongholds such as Kensington and Chelsea and Wandsworth.

Corbyn's attackers constantly refer to anti-Semitic rants and threats on social media of unknown and dubious provenance, playing into demands for censorship of the Internet and online communication channels.

Yet such is Corbyn's devotion to preserving the "unity of the Labour party," despite his decades of opposition to war and racism of all forms, and his support of the rights of the Palestinians, that he sat quietly through the debate instead of exposing it for what it was—a blatant attempt by right-wing scoundrels to outlaw any opposition to Britain's geo-strategic interests abroad and at home.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**