

Ken Livingstone forced out of British Labour Party

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Former MP and mayor of London Ken Livingstone has left the Labour Party after 50 years of membership.

His resignation is the end product of a slanderous campaign led by the Blairites within Labour and various Zionist groups who, over the past two years, have mounted a witch hunt claiming the Labour Party and the entire “left” is riven with anti-Semitism. Their purpose is twofold:

- With extensive funding and support from the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, it seeks to silence criticism of Israel’s brutal treatment of the Palestinians through the slanderous equation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism—therefore branding most left-wing politics as racist and reactionary.

- The witch hunters are using charges of anti-Semitism as a lever with which to push the Labour Party further to the right and, ideally, remove Jeremy Corbyn and his followers from the leadership.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has fundamental differences with Livingstone and his pro-Labour, pro-capitalist perspective. But accusations against him of anti-Semitism are a vile slander.

Anti-Semitism as an ideology is historically associated with the fascist and extreme right, which whipped up hatred of the Jews to mobilise sections of the ruined middle class against the working class and the socialist movement.

Over the last 30 years, the term has been appropriated and misused to silence political opposition to Zionism and the state of Israel which has nothing to do with race, religion or ethnicity. After all, there are substantial figures among right-wing defenders of Israel, attracted by its conflict with Muslim peoples and pro-imperialist politics, who are rabid anti-Semites.

The political necessity for the campaign to delegitimize anti-Zionism was bloodily exposed by the May 14 massacre of 62 Palestinians on the border with Gaza. The hypocrisy involved was made clear by the fact that Netanyahu was busy that day celebrating the 70th anniversary of Israel and opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem alongside far-right politicians and Christian fundamentalist preachers who await the final destruction of the Jewish people as a precursor to the Second Coming.

The acclaimed Middle East analyst Jonathan Cook published an appraisal this week of the origins of false claims of a “New Anti-Semitism” within the European left. He links this directly with the eruption of militarism in the Middle East, citing an article written by Daniel Goldhagen for the US Jewish weekly *Forward* in 2003, the year of the Iraq War, asserting that a “Globalized anti-Semitism” existed which was “relentlessly international in its focus on Israel at the center of the most conflict-ridden region today, and on the United States as the world’s omnipresent power.”

This thesis was taken up by a group of British Jewish intellectuals, including the *Guardian*’s executive editor Jonathan Freedland, *Daily Mail* columnist Melanie Phillips, formerly of the *Guardian*, and Britain’s then-chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks—all of whom have played a leading role in accusing the Corbynite “left” of anti-Semitism—in a book titled *A New Antisemitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st Century Britain*.

The “New anti-Semitism playbook was quickly updated after Corbyn became Labour leader,” Cook concludes, because he was “the first head of a major modern European party to prioritise the suffering of Palestinians over Israel’s right to colonise the Palestinians’ homeland.”

For these right-wing forces, the expulsion of

Livingstone is considered a key goal due to his public prominence. The impact of his resignation will therefore be broadly felt.

Livingstone's decision is an unpardonable retreat in the face of this witch hunt. But the moving force behind his resignation appears to have been Corbyn and his advisors. Corbyn never once came to Livingstone's defence in the two years since his suspension and many of Corbyn's allies, including Labour peer Shami Chakrabarti, the former director of Liberty, the civil and humanitarian rights advocacy group, backed the demand for his expulsion.

Corbyn appears to have avoided such an outcome by appealing to Livingstone's loyalty to urge him to fall on his sword. In a statement, Livingstone declared, "We desperately need a Corbyn-led government to transform Britain and I'll continue to work to this end... The ongoing issues around my suspension from the Labour party have become a distraction from the key political issue of our time..."

Corbyn endorsed Livingstone's decision as "the right thing to do." On what grounds does he make such a statement?

The only criterion by which such a move is "the right thing to do" is a desire to placate the right wing in the hope of a compromise that will maintain the unity of the Labour Party. Had Corbyn urged opposition to the witch hunt of his longtime ally, this would have met a powerful response among his hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file supporters. Instead, in agreement with Corbyn, Livingstone has gone quietly.

Throwing Livingstone to the wolves is only the latest example of Corbyn's determined pursuit of this strategic goal—for which he is ready to sacrifice any political principle and even his most loyal allies. Less than a month ago, with Corbyn again urging acquiescence, lifelong Labour member and anti-racism campaigner Marc Wadsworth was expelled after accusing leading Zionist MP Ruth Smeeth of colluding in a right-wing media attack.

A genuine fight against Labour's right wing and its Zionist and Conservative allies cannot be waged under the leadership of Corbyn and the rest of the parliamentary "left," who have spent their lives ensconced within the party's pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist bureaucracy.

Far from appeasing the right wing, Corbyn's

readiness to "sacrifice" Livingstone has put the smell of blood in the water. His resignation will be the signal for a stepped-up cull of anyone on the left who has criticized Israel, while the right wing tightens its hold on the party's reins.

Labour MP Luciana Berger, one of the lead inquisitors in the anti-Semitism campaign, welcomed the resignation but made clear she expects other heads to roll. "There are a number of outstanding high-profile cases that the party needs to process, that we are still waiting for," she said.

Moreover, the impact of the pro-Zionist right taking such a high-profile scalp will be felt internationally. The witch hunt and expulsions within Labour will be held up by right-wing forces all over the world—above all in Israel and the United States—as proof of the left's supposed rampant anti-Semitism and used as a justification for systematic political censorship and persecution.



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