

Anti-Semitism campaign against Corbyn links opposition to Israel's crimes with support for terrorism

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The ongoing witch-hunt of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has now assumed the form of a concerted trawl through his political history by the media to identify occasions proving his supposed blind hatred of Jews.

His “anti-Semitism” is said to be exemplified by his relations with various opponents of the state of Israel and by his past condemnations of its crimes against the Palestinians.

The most prominent and sustained recent attack has been dubbed “Wreathgate.” It involves photos run by the right-wing *Daily Mail* on Saturday, showing Corbyn during a visit to Tunisia in 2014, holding a wreath at a memorial service. The photos are said to prove that, just one year before becoming Labour leader, Corbyn was honouring Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leaders implicated in the kidnap and murder by the Palestinian Black September Group of 11 Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich in 1972.

The narrative is, for the most part, a carefully manufactured lie.

Hamman Chott cemetery is the Palestinian national cemetery in Tunisia, where Palestinians not allowed repatriation by Israel are buried. Those who carried out the Munich attack are not buried there.

Corbyn attended a ceremony there at the invitation of the Tunisian government, commemorating Israel's 1985 bombing of the PLO's headquarters in Tunisia that claimed between 47 and 71 lives. The ceremony and an associated conference were in part focused on attempts to secure a unity agreement between the Islamist group Hamas, which still controls the Gaza Strip, and the main faction of the PLO, Fatah, which rules in the West Bank—moves which Corbyn supported.

Making an amalgam of Corbyn and Black September, the *Daily Mail* got out its tape-measure, noting the

memorial to the victims of the 1985 bombing was just 15 yards from where Corbyn was pictured. To clinch matters, the *Mail* reported that, in comparison, Corbyn stood just two metres from four graves of senior PLO members, including individuals Israel has claimed were behind the formation of the Black September group.

A wreath is laid every year at the graves of Atef Bseiso, the PLO's head of intelligence, who was assassinated outside a Paris hotel in 1992, almost certainly by Israel's secret service, Mossad, ostensibly in revenge for the 1972 attack; Salah Khalaf, better known as Abu Iyad, who was the second in command in the PLO when he was killed in Tunis in 1991; his key aide Fakhri al-Omari; and Hayel Abdel-Hamid, the PLO chief of security.

Corbyn was said to be doubly damned because he stated in the Communist Party of Britain's *Morning Star* in October 2014 that he was present for a ceremony honouring the 1985 victims and “others killed by Mossad agents in Paris in 1991.”

Corbyn has since told Sky News, “A wreath was indeed laid by some of those who attended the conference for those who were killed in Paris in 1992. I was present when it was laid, I don't think I was actually involved in it.”

Bseiso in fact ended his life as the PLO's liaison officer with foreign intelligence agencies and was a regular contact of the CIA. The US protested his killing by Mossad, which is still believed to have authored his assassination, despite claims of the involvement of other PLO factions opposed to his conciliatory stance.

The hypocrisy involved in the anti-Corbyn campaign is staggering. He is accused of being an apologist for terrorism simply for standing near the graves of PLO leaders who have been accused by Israel of terrorist involvement. His accusers include an Israeli ruling elite

that forged a state based on a terrorist campaign against Britain, Labour MPs who honour Tony Blair and Gordon Brown for securing peace in Northern Ireland through talks with Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army, and by Conservatives and Labourites who will happily defend the crimes of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and any other state allied to British and US imperialism.

Corbyn went part way towards exposing such double standards when he responded to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who had tweeted, “The laying of a wreath by Jeremy Corbyn on the graves of the terrorist who perpetrated the Munich massacre and his comparison of Israel to the Nazis deserves unequivocal condemnation from everyone—left, right and everything in between.”

Corbyn tweeted in reply, “What deserves unequivocal condemnation is the killing of over 160 Palestinian protesters in Gaza by Israeli forces since March, including dozens of children.”

Despite this brief spark of fight, however, Corbyn cannot defend either himself or his supporters from charges of anti-Semitism. He is seeking to appease rather than confront his opponents, whose attack centres on the claim that opposition to Israel is equivalent to anti-Semitism.

Every charge made against Corbyn can be refuted and turned against his accusers.

Corbyn was attending the Tunisian conference at the end of September 2014, just weeks after Israel’s Operation Protective Edge military offensive on Gaza (July 8-August 26), which caused a level of death and destruction more devastating than Israel’s previous assaults in 2008-2009 and 2012.

Some 1,479 of the 2,158 Palestinians killed by Israel were civilians, including 506 children, while about 66 Israeli soldiers and five civilians were killed. More than 100,000 Palestinians in Gaza were left without a habitable home to return to, and 497,000 people were internally displaced.

Israel’s murderous assault followed an agreement reached in April 2014 between Hamas and Fatah to form a national unity government, which Netanyahu refused to countenance—attributing the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers to Hamas to justify Operation Protective Edge.

In the *Morning Star* article that has elicited such outrage from the Labour right-wing and the Tories, Corbyn wrote that “in 1986 Israeli jets screamed in to bomb the relocated headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, causing many deaths,”

explaining how “the PLO had relocated after the massacres at Sabra and Shatilla in 1982 when Israeli troops oversaw massacres by Phalangist militias.” Corbyn wrote of “the appalling death toll of 2,100 Palestinian dead and 100 Israeli casualties during the so-called Protective Edge assault,” and of British imperialism’s “special role” in the suffering of the Palestinians.

Today, instead of waging a counter-offensive against his tormentors, Corbyn is once again busy seeking “unity” with them. He is currently negotiating the adoption of the full definition and 11 associated examples put forward by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) that will be used to define anti-Zionist opposition to Israel as a form of anti-Semitism. He wants only to qualify one example—defining as anti-Semitic any criticism of the founding of the state of Israel as a “racist endeavour”—with provisos allowing for non-anti-Semitic criticism of Israel’s founding.

Even this is not enough for his main backers, in Momentum and the trade union bureaucracy, who want him to agree to all examples without qualification.

The net result of all such appeals for compromise is to spur on the right wing, which has as its aim the criminalisation of political opposition to Israel’s crimes and the outlawing of all opposition to the attacks on the social gains and democratic rights of the working class. Corbyn’s rotten compromise with a *de facto* political alliance of Tories, Labourites and their media backers will serve to consolidate the grip of the financial oligarchy and their agenda of austerity, militarism and war.



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