

# UK Labour Party members rebel against suspension of Chris Williamson MP for bogus claims of anti-Semitism

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Tens of thousands of Labour members and supporters are opposing the suspension of Derby North Labour MP Chris Williamson and the ongoing witch-hunt by the Blairite right-wing centred on bogus allegations of anti-Semitism.

Williamson was suspended February 27 for politically accurate comments made at a meeting in Sheffield of the pro-Corbyn Momentum group. He told his audience, to applause, that Labour was being “demonised as a racist, bigoted party. ... I have got to say I think our party’s response has been partly responsible for that because in my opinion...we have backed off too much, we have given too much ground, we have been too apologetic.”

Uxbridge and South Ruislip, Sheffield Hallam, Hackney North and Stoke Newington, Hastings and Rye, Bristol East, and Park & Arbourthorne ward, Sheffield Heeley Constituency Labour Parties (CLP) have all passed motions demanding Williamson be reinstated. Members in one of the largest branches of the Hornsey Wood Green CLP, Alexandra Park, were due to debate a motion demanding Williamson’s reinstatement Wednesday evening.

Three petitions to this effect have received 4,400, 2,200 and over 2,000 signatures covering virtually every CLP across the UK.

One petition, “Labour Party members in solidarity with Chris Williamson,” notes that Labour leader “Jeremy Corbyn recently said: ‘Chris Williamson is a very good, very effective Labour MP. He’s a very strong anti-racist campaigner. He is not anti-Semitic.’ We agree with this description of Chris and believe that the allegations in question are unfounded and out of context.”

Despite Corbyn’s previous comments, he has not opposed Williamson’s suspension even though he was accused of interfering by a pack of Blairites, baying for

his ally’s blood. This follows Corbyn’s refusal to defend other leading supporters targeted for smears, including Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth and Jackie Walker.

Among those signing the petition are 12 members from the Wavertree constituency party in Liverpool, whose MP, Luciana Berger, has played a central role in seeking to remove Corbyn as leader since his 2015 election and who left the party last month with another eight Blairites after accusing it of being “institutionally anti-Semitic.” Berger faced motions of no confidence in Wavertree until Labour’s national leadership succeeded in getting them withdrawn.

Others who have made statements opposing the witch-hunt are renowned film director Ken Loach and comedian Alexei Sayle. Groups within the Labour Party, including Jewish Voice for Labour, are opposed, as are several pseudo-left organisations.

Thousands of Corbyn supporters are demanding a full-scale confrontation with the Blairites and for them to be deselected and booted out, not Williamson.

The Hackney motion states, “It is a scandal that we are allowing ourselves to be branded as a racist party. Meanwhile, figures like Tony Blair—who bear responsibility for the death and destruction of the Iraq war and who repeatedly, openly attack the democratically elected leadership of the party—are allowed to remain as Labour members.”

Among the main targets for removal is Labour Deputy Leader Tom Watson, who has played a key role in destabilising Corbyn’s leadership by endorsing the slanders of Berger, et al.

Over 18,000 have signed a petition calling for a “A Vote of No Confidence in Tom Watson MP as Deputy Leader of the Labour Party.” It calls “for him to be removed from his post for repeated attacks on the Labour

Party, its membership and its voters.”

Another petition, “Reinstate Chris Williamson MP—It is Tom Watson MP who should be suspended,” has received more than 1,300 signatures.

The Hornsey Wood Green motion urged Williamson’s reinstatement and called on Watson to resign, so that the “Labour Party membership can elect a Deputy Leader who actually represents them.”

Immediately after his suspension, the hashtag #standupfor Williamson was trending with more than 16,400 sharing it.

While many rank-and-file members hold the position that Corbyn had his hands tied, did not actually authorise Williamson’s removal and is a lone figure being dragged down by the Labour right, others have concluded that this is one capitulation too far and that they are leaving the party or considering doing so.

Journalist and broadcaster Neil Clark received widespread support in response to his tweet, “I can support Jeremy Corbyn no more. You can’t keep fighting for a man who keeps throwing his most loyal allies under the bus to try and placate his implacable enemies.”

One tweeted, “Neither can I anymore. JC has become a Mr capitulate. Chris was his most loyal, most vocal and most effective defender. Chris said nothing wrong. His suspension is the final straw.”

Another commented, “[I]f they can do this to the party now when we are out of power, how likely do you think a Socialist programme is to happen even if we win power? It’s time to ask Jeremy Corbyn to stand with us as we stand with him!”

Another tweeted, “There has to be a point where you say enough is enough. That point has long gone. We’re here because the leadership’s dithered and retreated rather than stand up to it. Stand up for the poor? Can’t stand up for themselves!”

Many denounced pro-Corbyn media groups for throwing Williamson “under a bus,” like the Skwawkbox blog, which opposed expressions of “solidarity” with Williamson (without mentioning him by name) and urged its readers to “think strategically” and “play the long game.” One warned in response, “If we want a Corbyn-led government that will implement socialist and anti-war policies then it’s going to take a huge fight—yes, a fight—against the right. Or sooner than later we’ll run out of comrades to throw under the bus and no Corbyn project left.”

Another tweeted that he still backed Corbyn but “[I] also won’t be actively promoting or supporting, walking

the streets. ... So till Tom Watson & Co are gone I won’t be wasting my time on Labour. .... They CAN let these MPs go and still be the major force in UK politics but at the moment they are losing people by the hour.”

These political contradictions cannot be sustained indefinitely, with the Corbyn movement polarising between those who want to fight and those, including its leadership, caving in to the right-wing.

Among the Labour groups defending Williamson are three local organisations of Momentum—Momentum Camden, Swansea Momentum and Welsh Labour Grassroots. But Momentum’s leader Jon Lansman is one of the main witch-hunters in the anti-Semitism campaign—backing Williamson’s removal and reportedly urging Momentum members to cease posting supportive statements about Jackie Walker—the black Jewish former vice chair of Momentum!

Dozens of his members denounced his filthy role, with many saying they had left or were leaving Momentum. One tweeted, “Your actions these last few days have caused me and many more to ditch Momentum. You have given it a very bad image along with Watson. Neither of you will EVER be trusted again.” Another wrote, “I’ve resigned from Momentum because of your lack of support for comrades that you KNOW are not anti-Semitic...shame on you.”

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* warned all those seeking to fight Labour’s right-wing that they would inevitably end up in a direct confrontation with Corbyn himself, who would rather see the purge of thousands of his own supporters than wage a fight against the Blairites.

Corbyn’s closest ally, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, made this plain Sunday, when he was asked by Sophy Ridge on Sky News if Labour had a problem with anti-Semitism. McDonnell replied: “We clearly do. We clearly do” and must be “more ruthless, more severe” in dealing with it. He repeated this slander even as he noted that party statistics show that just 0.1 percent of members, out of a party with nearly 600,000 members, had faced complaints over the issue.



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