

Labour MP Chris Williamson suspended as Corbyn again appeases his right wing

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It took just two days and a howl of outrage from a collection of right-wing Blairites and Zionists for Chris Williamson MP to be suspended from the Labour Party for a second time on June 28.

Williamson was first suspended on February 27, like so many others at the behest of right-wing and Zionist groups and individuals—based on false accusations of anti-Semitism. He was filmed at a Momentum meeting in Sheffield telling his audience something that would be readily agreed by the majority of members—that Labour was being “demonised as a racist, bigoted party” and had “given too much ground [and] been too apologetic” in its response. “We’ve done more to address the scourge of anti-Semitism than any other political party.”

The usual suspects—all involved in the destabilisation campaign aimed at discrediting and removing Jeremy Corbyn as party leader—demanded an investigation into Williamson. They included Labour’s Deputy leader Tom Watson and the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), which has close ties to the Israeli government and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Williamson apologised for his “choice of words,” as many ordinary members rallied to his defence.

Williamson has been targeted because of his exposure of attacks on Corbyn’s handling of alleged anti-Semitism in the party as “proxy wars and bullshit” and “a really dirty, lowdown trick... Many people in the Jewish community are appalled by what they see as the weaponisation of antisemitism for political ends.”

In the same month as his initial suspension, Williamson booked a room in the Houses of Parliament to screen Jon Pullman’s *Witch Hunt*, a film defending Black-Jewish party member Jackie Walker from accusations of anti-Semitism.

Williamson was also filmed saying he had celebrated

the resignation of Joan Ryan MP after she joined the now failed merger between a half-dozen Blairite MPs and pro-European Tories in the Independent Group. Chair of Labour Friends of Israel, Ryan was exposed in *Al Jazeera* documentary *The Lobby* as having daily contact with Shai Masot, an embassy staffer filmed plotting to “take down” MPs perceived as hostile to Israel.

On June 26, a three-member panel of Labour’s National Executive Committee (NEC), the National Constitutional Committee, under advisement by an independent barrister, gave Williamson a formal sanction for breaching party rules—what rules remain unclear—but only issued him with a formal warning, effectively lifting his suspension.

Williamson tweeted, “I’d like to express my heartfelt thanks for the avalanche of goodwill messages from grassroots members. I can now focus on representing local people in Derby Nth and working for a Corbyn-led Labour govt to positively transform the lives of millions. Together anything is possible!”

He spoke too soon. The campaign of hysterical outrage was immediate and predictable. A letter was drawn up and signed by around 120 Labour MPs and Peers that rounded up all the usual Blairite suspects under Watson’s leadership. Signatories included Lord Levy, Ruth Smeeth, Louise Ellman, Margaret Hodge, Lord Dubs, Corbyn leadership challengers Owen Smith and Liz Kendall, Stella Creasy, Stephen Kinnock, Chris Bryant, Wes Streeting, Jess Phillips and Blair’s co-conspirator (Lord) Peter Mandelson.

The letter suggested political interference and targeted Corbyn, calling on him to “show leadership by asking for this inappropriate, offensive and reputationally damaging decision to be overturned and reviewed. Ultimately, it is for Jeremy Corbyn to decide

whether Chris Williamson retains the Labour whip. He must remove it immediately if we are to stand any hope of persuading anyone that the Labour Party is taking antisemitism seriously.”

The Board of Deputies of British Jews called the Williamson decision an “utter disgrace.” Margaret Hodge termed it “appalling, outrageous and unacceptable that he should be allowed back into the party.” Wes Streeting and Stella Creasy claimed the decision was “a fix,” linked to the party’s efforts to get candidates in place for the next election by allowing Williamson to stand before the deadline expired.

John Lansman, who controls the pro-Corbyn pressure group Momentum, continued his work as apologist for the witch-hunt, denouncing Williamson for not showing “one iota of contrition” and demanding, “He has to go!”

A letter was also sent to party general secretary Jennie Formby, signed by Labour staff members who claimed they would be “made to feel unwelcome” by Williamson’s “presence whilst at work.”

Corbyn showed just as little appetite to defend Williamson as he has previously demonstrated in relation to Jackie Walker, Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth and others targeted for slander and removal by the Blairites.

Labour sources first insisted that Corbyn could not and would not interfere because, under “the party’s rule book, the general secretary and the leader of the party cannot overturn decisions made by NEC panels, which are advised by independent barristers. Only the NEC has the power to do so.”

Then, while campaigning in Hartlepool on Thursday, Corbyn said, “I wasn’t involved in the decision at all, it was an independent panel set up through the National Executive, they examined the case and they’ve decided to let him back in, albeit with a reprimand.

“They went through the case, they interviewed him and they went through the case in great detail, and the three of them on the panel made that decision,” he added before stressing, “Anyone that makes antisemitic remarks can expect to be at the very least reprimanded and, if they are very serious and they engage in antisemitic activity, then they are expelled from the party.”

Corbyn hid behind constitutional niceties, not out of a reluctance to move against one of his closest

supporters, but for fear that any open attack would further undermine his “left” reputation among Labour’s rank-and-file. His remarks fell just short of openly accepting that Williamson had indeed been guilty of anti-Semitism.

Behind the scenes a genuine fix was already underway. Keith Vaz, a right-wing former minister, was drafted onto the disciplinary committee due to the illness of one member. He voted to readmit Williamson along with Huda Elmi. But in response to the renewed campaign against Williamson, Vaz wrote to Formby calling on her to review the disciplinary committee’s decision. The leaking of its initial ruling to the media, he argued, meant its decisions in 36 other disciplinary cases could be subject to legal challenge. To ensure the “complete integrity” of the process, either a new panel should be convened or all the cases it dealt with on Wednesday should be referred to the party’s disputes committee for reconsideration.

Offering his own excuses, Vaz said he had been asked to sit on the panel at the last minute and had gone to the meeting “despite having medical treatment that day, which continued after the meeting... In my view, having served on the NEC for 15 years I consider the decisions the panel made yesterday cannot stand.”

And so it came to pass. Williamson had the party whip withdrawn based on Vaz’s stated concerns. In the light of past experience, there is now every likelihood that expulsion will follow. No other decision will be acceptable to the Blairites and a baying media pack.

Corbyn has proved once again that he will do whatever is necessary to maintain unity with his party’s right-wing, while proving he can be trusted to form a government that loyally serves the interests of the British ruling class. The initial victims of Corbyn’s political cowardice and treachery have been his own supporters. If he ever becomes prime minister, those who will pay the price will be the millions of workers and young people who have looked to him to wage a struggle against austerity, war and the growing assault on basic democratic rights.



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