

UK Labour leadership tells Zionist meeting that thousands of party members face expulsion

Thomas Scripps and Chris Marsden
2 December 2020

Labour's deputy leader Angela Rayner has declared her readiness to expel thousands of party members on manufactured charges of anti-Semitism or "denialism", i.e., rejecting the slander that the left is characterised by widespread hatred of Jews.

Rayner appeared alongside party leader Sir Keir Starmer at a one-day online conference of the pro-Zionist Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) and Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) on November 29. The meeting was held to coincide with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, marking the anniversary of the 1947 UN resolution 181 which urged the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

In attendance was a rogue's gallery of Blairites and Zionists, including Labour MP Margaret Hodge, who once screamed in former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's face that he was "a f***** anti-Semite" and has submitted dozens of unverified anti-Semitism claims; and former Labour MPs Ruth Smeeth, outed by WikiLeaks as a US "strictly protect" asset; Joan Ryan, previously caught fabricating an anti-Semitism allegation against a fellow Labour member; Louise Ellman; and Mike Gapes. Former MPs Ellman, Ryan and Gapes left the party in 2019 citing anti-Semitism in the party as the reason, with Ryan and Gapes joining a breakaway group from Labour in 2019 with the sole aim of undermining Labour's election chances.

They were joined by *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Freedland, who has written propaganda pieces such as, "The roots of Labour's antisemitism lie deep within the populist left", and BBC journalist John Ware—the man responsible for the hatchet-job *Panorama* documentary "Is Labour Anti-Semitic?" and a string of legal actions and threats against the Labour party and Corbyn-supporting media groups.

Starmer and Rayner were joined by Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds, Foreign Secretary Lisa Nandy, Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and Blairite grandees Peter Mandelson and David Miliband.

Rayner—once touted by the Momentum group, founded in order to support Corbyn, as a "left"—delivered a public declaration of war, warning that Labour members must "get real" about antisemitism within the party or "thousands and thousands" could be suspended.

She did so after denouncing an online Nottingham East Constituency Labour Party (CLP) meeting held Friday, that

debated and passed a motion calling for the Labour whip to be restored to Corbyn.

Corbyn was suspended from the Labour Party on October 29, after registering a mild protest against an Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report released that day claiming that there were "unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination" against Jewish members, "for which the Labour Party is responsible". Corbyn said of the EHRC's claims that "the scale of the problem [of anti-Semitism] was... dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media." He was readmitted by a disciplinary panel of the National Executive Committee while also being given a formal warning on November 17, after making a grovelling statement, "To be clear, concerns about antisemitism are neither 'exaggerated' nor 'overstated'". But the next day Starmer refused him the party whip and he now sits in parliament as a nominal independent.

Labour's General Secretary David Evans has ruled all motions protesting Corbyn's treatment out of order. Rayner utilised this political censorship to threaten "our Labour members": "If they don't think antisemitism is within the Labour Party and that there's problems now, then there's really no place for them in the Labour Party."

"If they think making people feel unsafe or unwelcome in our meetings is a response to the EHRC report, then they need to be out of our party immediately... If I have to suspend thousands and thousands of members, we will do that."

Making clear that even exercising the democratic right to disagree with slanders and expulsions would also be subject to disciplinary action, she threatened, "You know, we have debates but there's no debating what the EHRC said."

The claim that Jewish members are being made to feel unsafe in meetings is already being used to silence local Labour Party organisations and prevent discussions and motions which so much as mention Corbyn's name.

For allowing the motion calling for Corbyn's reinstatement as a Labour MP to be debated, Louise Regan, the chair of Nottingham East CLP, has been suspended. Pete Firmin and Bridget Dunne, the chair and vice-chair of Hampstead and Kilburn CLP, have met the same fate for allowing a similar motion to be debated and passed. Local MPs Nadia Whittome, a member of the Socialist

Campaign Group, and Thangam Debbonaire both supported the suspensions. At least 16 such votes in other CLPs have been ruled out of order.

Starmer's pilgrimage to the JLM epitomises the extent to which the Labour Party is now in the total control of the most right-wing, anti-socialist elements. Preparations for mass expulsions of members take place as Blairite renegades are invited back into the party.

John Mann, the former Blairite MP who spearheaded the campaign to throw Ken Livingstone out of the Labour Party, now sits in the House of Lords as an independent. He still retains his Labour Party membership after being made Baron Mann of Holbeck Moor by former Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, for services rendered, and acting as an advisor to the Tory government on anti-Semitism. He wrote on Sunday's conference in the Tory party's house organ, the *Daily Telegraph*, insisting that Starmer "needs to embrace the reality that most British Jews define themselves as Zionists. It is their identity, who they are... He must make Zionism a term of endearment not a term of abuse and banish from his party those who defile the right of Jewish people to determine for themselves their own identity."

Starmer must "open his arms to and, if necessary, bend his knee and ask Louise Ellman and Luciana Berger [another former Labour MP who joined the Liberal Democrats] to return to their true home."

Labour's rule book makes those who campaign for other parties ineligible for Labour membership for five years. But asked at the JLM/LFI conference if he would consider readmitting former Labour members who campaigned for non-Labour candidates for parliament, Starmer dutifully replied, "We... need to find a way to make that happen."

In the face of these outrages, Corbyn is again refusing to fight and allowing those who try to do so on his behalf to be persecuted.

The only action he has taken is to mount a legal challenge to the removal of the Labour whip. The basis of the case being prepared by his lawyers only underscores his political cowardice and lack of principle.

According to the *Guardian*, which has seen the relevant documentation, Corbyn's case centres on the argument that he had secured a back-door agreement with Starmer that his November 17 "clarification" that "concerns about antisemitism are neither 'exaggerated' nor 'overstated'" would earn him a return to the Labour benches.

Starmer, his chief of staff Morgan McSweeney, Rayner, Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey and former shadow cabinet minister under Corbyn, John Trickett, reportedly held a private meeting in Starmer's office the day after Corbyn's suspension to discuss the terms of surrender. Corbyn then had his "clarification" agreed through backchannel Zoom calls and WhatsApp messages between McSweeney, McCluskey, Trickett and Starmer's special adviser, Simon Fletcher. A final Zoom meeting between Corbyn's advisers and McSweeney supposedly finalised an agreement that Corbyn would receive only the most minor sanction.

Not since Neville Chamberlain returned from negotiations with Adolf Hitler at Munich in 1938, proclaiming "peace for our time" and instructing everyone to "Go home and get a nice quiet sleep"

has an act of appeasement of the enemy been so badly miscalculated.

Corbyn's filthy argument for maintaining his own position in the Labour Party is that he sought a private accommodation with a vicious right-wing cabal intent on smearing and then expelling countless Labour members who backed him in the mistaken belief that he would fight for socialist politics against the Blairites. It is the crowning example of a long record of political treachery that saw him refuse to defend hundreds of party members and numerous close allies including Livingstone, Jackie Walker, and Chris Williamson, from bogus accusations of anti-Semitism.

Corbyn took hold of an incipient revolt against the Blairites, defended the right-wingers against demands for their expulsion, demobilised all opposition to the Tory government and then handed the party over to the witchfinders, Starmer, Rayner et al.

In the process he has betrayed countless workers and young people in Britain and internationally seeking to oppose Israel's criminal oppression of the Palestinians by allowing them to be slandered as anti-Semites and opening the gates to a far broader campaign of censorship and repression.

Corbyn is the archetypal representative of the party's dwindling group of "lefts"—whose increasingly mealy-mouthed rhetoric is utilised solely to dampen opposition and to oppose any independent struggle for socialism by the working class.

Today the Corbynites' efforts are not directed towards opposing the witch-hunt but rather preventing workers and young people from leaving the Labour Party. Since Starmer became leader, at least 57,000 people have quit the party—over ten percent of the total membership and equivalent to 250 resignations per day. Corbyn's second in command, former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has described this in the most cynical terms as a "self-purge". Unlike the real purge instigated by Starmer, this is one McDonnell is prepared to fight.

"I can't come to terms with this," McDonnell told *Guardian* columnist Owen Jones, himself a key player in the anti-Semitism witch-hunt. It was a form of "self-harm. I'm trying to say to people stick around, because I think we can overcome the issue with regard to Jeremy... In some ways, the left is being really tested about 'are we really serious?'"

The central political lesson of the last five years is that the influence of the Labour and trade union "lefts", and their allies in groups such as the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party, is fatal to any serious struggle against the ruling class and its political agents. The "left anti-Semitism" campaign must be defeated. But this is only possible through a decisive break with Corbynism and a struggle to build the revolutionary leadership of the Socialist Equality Party in the working class.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact