

Corbyn seeks readmittance to Labour Party as antisemitism witch-hunt escalates

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Former party leader Jeremy Corbyn has begun legal proceedings seeking to force current leader Sir Keir Starmer to allow him to sit again as a Labour Party MP. Starmer withdrew the Labour whip from Corbyn last November after he was briefly suspended from the party for making a criticism of the politically motivated Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report into antisemitism in the Labour Party.

Corbyn's lawyer Christopher Jacobs argued in court Monday that his client's removal from the Parliamentary Labour Party was a "fundamental breach of contract" that broke a "settled agreement" reached between Corbyn and the Labour leadership.

According to Jacobs, "it was agreed that there would be no further sanction imposed in respect of my client" at two meetings in late October and early November, between Corbyn's original suspension from the party and readmission.

Corbyn is seeking minutes or notes of those meetings as proof of Starmer's "procedural unfairness" and "breach of good faith".

The entire affair is deeply degrading. Corbyn has every right to launch a legal challenge, but he is using this to justify his silence on all questions of principle and refusal to fight the ongoing witch-hunt of the "left" based on bogus accusations of anti-Semitism.

What does his case amount to? Corbyn accepted the EHRC report—the latest stage in a right-wing, anti-democratic witch-hunt—saying he trusted "its recommendations will be swiftly implemented to help move on from this period." Trying in vain to maintain some shred of dignity before his supporters, in a masterpiece of understatement he attached the caveat that "the scale of the [anti-Semitism] problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media."

The moment Starmer had him suspended from the Labour Party, he withdrew even this figleaf covering his political prostration, issuing an apology for his remarks and declaring that the antisemitism campaign had been "neither 'exaggerated' nor 'overstated'."

Corbyn now argues the least Starmer can do is keep up his end of the bargain. The sum total of Corbyn's position—of the man built up by the pseudo-left for years as a socialist messiah—is "Please Sir Keir! Throw me a bone!"

Starmer responded to Corbyn's desperate entreaties with a customary display of cynicism and contempt. Commenting on the legal action he said, "My message across the Labour Party is: Let's all pull together."

Starmer says this having expelled the acknowledged leader of the party's "left-wing" and after suspending numerous members over the last few months, including Constituency Labour Party officials for so

much as allowing Corbyn's suspension to be debated.

Deputy Leader Angela Rayner, once touted as a "left", has threatened thousands more with expulsion. This will be facilitated by at least one individual recruited directly out of Israeli intelligence. According to an investigative piece by journalist Asa Winstanley, Labour have hired a former member of Israel's cyberwarfare department to help manage their social media.

But the fact remains that Corbyn has spent years appealing for his supporters to commit to unity with the Blairite right and stop their efforts to drive them out of the party. Starmer's leadership and his own suspension from the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) is the end result of this political cowardice. And were he to be allowed to sit as a Labour MP again, Corbyn would loyally support the continuing antisemitism witch-hunt, spending his time pontificating on the ills of the world from the backbenches in a way that never seriously challenged the Blairites' stranglehold on the working class, or the fundamental interests of British imperialism.

He has recently formed a personal vehicle for this exact purpose—the Peace and Justice Project. Launched Sunday with the help of political scoundrels like former SYRIZA finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, Unite union leader Len McCluskey and academic Noam Chomsky, the organisation was described by Corbyn as "not a political party, but a space in which people can come together" to create "space, hope and opportunity"; "share experiences and generate ideas," and provide "research and analysis." He has yet to convince Labour's right-wing that these do-gooding banalities can be tolerated in a party lurching so sharply to the right.

Corbyn's prostration before the antisemitism witch-hunt has already had severe consequences.

In a Perspective article on Corbyn's suspension, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (UK) Chris Marsden explained, "Left unchallenged, [the political witch hunt] will have a chilling effect on democratic rights, including the right to free speech and the right of political parties to advance policies that are deemed illegitimate by an unaccountable cabal of state operatives and political scoundrels.

"None of this excuses the fact that Corbyn is the architect of his own fate and is responsible for allowing the right-wing to carry out its schemes against the working class."

After the success enjoyed in the Labour Party, the witch-hunt continues in the UK and internationally. Since mid-2019, the Conservative government has been pressuring British universities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition and examples of antisemitism.

The IHRA's ambiguous 38-word definition and specific listed examples of antisemitic behaviour, focussing on Israel, provide a

pretext for condemning principled opposition to the Israeli state and the nationalist ideology of Zionism. It was adopted by the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn in 2018, paving the way for an escalated purge of Labour's membership.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson wrote to university vice-chancellors in October 2020 decriing the "frankly disturbing" fact that most universities had not adopted the IHRA definition. He threatened that if he did not see "the overwhelming majority of institutions adopting the definition by Christmas," then he would ask the Office for Students (OfS) to take regulatory action, possibly including suspending "funding streams".

In the US, in 2019, President Donald Trump issued an executive order urging federal departments to adopt the IHRA definition and its examples. Maine, Tennessee and South Carolina are moving legislation to bring the definition into state law. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo identified the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement targeted against Israel, as an anti-Semitic organisation in November 2020, and promised to cut non-profit groups supporting BDS off from government funding.

The same year, the German Bundestag passed a resolution titled, "Resolutely confronting the BDS movement—combating anti-Semitism". It accused BDS of being anti-Semitic and enshrined the IHRA definition.

This reactionary campaign is meeting significant opposition.

On January 7, the *Guardian* published a letter from eight eminent lawyers, including four QCs and two former appeal court judges, opposing the IHRA definition and its imposition on universities by the Tories. They write:

"The legally entrenched right to free expression is being undermined by an internally incoherent 'non-legally binding working definition' of antisemitism...

"The definition is often described as 'the international definition of antisemitism', but it has no legislative or other authority in international or domestic law...

"[The examples of antisemitism listed by the IHRA] have been widely used to suppress or avoid criticism of the state of Israel.

"The impact on public discourse both inside and outside universities has already been significant. Mr Williamson's threat should be withdrawn."

At the annual Limmud Festival in late December, Professor David Feldman, director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism at Birkbeck College, London, argued that the IHRA was being used "to stifle free speech" and described it as "a threat to legitimate protest".

The same month, a working group established by the academic board of University College London recommended the institution retract its November 2019 adoption of the IHRA definition and examples. Their report states that they "disproportionately draw debate over Israel and Palestine into conversations around antisemitism, potentially conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism... thereby... risking the suppression of legitimate speech and academic research."

Last Tuesday, 10 Jewish organisations in the US grouped together in the Progressive Israel Network (PIN) issued a statement opposing "the effort to enshrine [the IHRA definition] in domestic law and institutional policy."

The PIN organisations say they "care deeply about the State of Israel," but warn of the "ways in which the effort to combat antisemitism is being misused and exploited to instead suppress

legitimate free speech, criticism of Israeli government actions, and advocacy for Palestinian rights." They continue, "We fear [the IHRA's] adoption in law or policy at the state, federal, and university level and in corporate governance has the potential to undermine core freedoms, and in some cases already has."

In Germany on December 9, 30 leading cultural institutions issued a statement opposing the German parliament's BDS-IHRA resolution. It states, "In the name of this resolution, significant voices and critical positions are being suppressed on the basis of false accusations of anti-Semitism."

A devastating blow was dealt to the attempt to equate criticisms of Israel with antisemitism by leading Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem. For the first time in its history, the organisation has described Israel as "an apartheid regime", advancing and cementing the "supremacy of one group—Jews—over another—Palestinians."

Not a trace of this opposition will find voice in Corbyn or the moribund Labour left. Corbyn is busy arguing the finer points of contract law with Starmer, while his supporters face slander, suspension and expulsion.

It should be noted that a separate court case is being launched, against the EHRC, by former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone and former Labour councillor Pam Bromley. They were the only two individuals held by the EHRC investigation into Labour to have been guilty of "unlawful harassment" of Jews while members of the party.

Livingstone was the first target of the anti-Semitism witch-hunt in 2016. He was thrown under the bus by Corbyn, apparently with Livingstone's consent, and resigned from Labour in 2018. With no position in the party left to lose, Livingstone has at least decided to clear his name and challenge the unfounded allegations against him. Corbyn, in contrast, says nothing the better to ingratiate himself with Starmer.

Opposing the "left anti-Semitism" campaign demands a decisive break with Corbyn, the dwindling rump of the "Labour left" and their counterparts internationally. A socialist leadership must be built in the working class, based on the revolutionary, internationalist principles of Trotskyism. This is the programme of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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