

Tory government threatens to defund UK National Union of Students citing bogus anti-Semitism allegations

Henry Lee
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Two weeks ago, Conservative minister of state for universities, Michelle Donelan announced a “package of robust sanctions” against the National Union of Students (NUS) citing allegations of anti-Semitism. The NUS is to be excluded from consultation with the Department for Education, Office for Students and Student Loans Company, and barred from receiving any government funding.

As with the media witch-hunt against former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn over anti-Semitism, the trumped-up allegations are an attempt to drive official politics further to the right and silence opposition to imperialism, particularly political opposition to the policies of the Israeli government.

There is no substance whatsoever to the allegations of anti-Semitism.

The media campaign aimed at NUS President Shaima Dallali has focused mainly on a tweet she posted as a teenager, 10 years ago, referencing the Battle of Khaybar, fought between Muslim and Jewish armies in the year 628. Dallali’s apology that “I was wrong to see the Palestine conflict as one between Muslims and Jews”, when the media is given free rein to paint Muslims as an existential threat to Jews, did nothing to stop the attacks on her. In a sinister move, Donelan ordered Civica Election Services, which oversees NUS elections, to investigate whether Dallali’s election was legitimate.

The attacks were orchestrated by the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and Community Security Trust (CST), two Zionist organisations. Each claims to represent the UK’s Jewish community, despite the CST’s main source of income being a £14 million grant from the government.

A further manifestation of “anti-Semitism” cited by the media is Dallali’s opposition to the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition conflating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. Universities have been threatened with funding cuts unless they adopt the IHRA definition and it was central in the recent sacking of the academic Professor David Miller by the University of Bristol for his research into state and corporate lobbying and criticism of US and Israeli militarism.

The imposition of the IHRA definition has been a key pillar of the Conservative government’s campaign to create an atmosphere of slavish subservience to a right-wing agenda in universities and the public-sector more generally. The Office for Students, whose “student panel” is set to take over some of the NUS’s advisory positions, was founded by the Tories in 2018 and was set to be led by arch-reactionary Toby Young, who was forced to step down after it emerged he had spoken at a secretive conference on eugenics.

Ideological conformity is to be enforced across society. To deliver his threat to be “watchful for any waste and wokery” in the National Health Service (NHS), Tory health secretary Sajid Javid appointed General Sir Gordon Messenger, former Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, to lead a review which, according to *Sky News* “will look at bringing in outsiders from the private sector into top NHS management jobs... and could also consider privatisation of some services.”

The attack on the NUS, which has long acted as a state-funded recruiting and training ground for career Labour politicians, comes as the government plays a key role in the NATO proxy war with Russia in Ukraine. Revealing the hypocrisy and danger of the

ensorship of critics of the US-led military alliance as “anti-Semites”, many of these weapons will end up in the hands of neo-Nazi fighters operating openly within the Ukrainian military such as the Azov Battalion. Following the fascist-led Maidan coup in 2014, Azov, the Right Sector and other far-right militias have provided training to fascists from around the world, who are now able to gain combat experience with the latest military technology.

In their attack on the NUS, the UJS and CST placed particular emphasis on the invitation of the rapper and pro-Palestinian activist Lowkey to its national conference, denouncing him as anti-Semitic for opening an interview with the *Electronic Intifada* journalist Asa Winstanley by discussing how “the mainstream media has weaponized the Jewish heritage of Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, to try and stave off these genuine enquiries into the nature of the groups fighting in Ukraine like the Azov Battalion, C-14 and others.”

This interview in particular drew the ire of these pro-imperialist lobby groups. It was targeted directly at the lie that NATO is a defensive alliance seeking to protect “sovereignty” and “democracy”, examining the integration of senior Nazis into the West German government, as well as other examples of the far-right being supported during the Cold War.

Lowkey’s comment was correct, referring to one of the most idiotic and banal propaganda lines brought out time and again by the media that there could not possibly be major neo-Nazi networks in Ukraine because its president is Jewish. They seek to downplay the major role played in Ukrainian politics by the far-right, which enjoys little popular support but since the Maidan coup in 2014 was given a free hand in waging war in the east of the country against pro-Russian separatists and terrorising domestic opponents. The Azov Battalion openly threatened both Zelensky and his predecessor, President Petro Poroshenko, to ensure no peaceful settlement could be reached with the separatists in the east, making them extremely useful to NATO in ensuring Ukraine fell in line with its provocations against Russia.

In 2019, the CST collaborated with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in producing a report on the growth of an international network of white supremacist organisations espousing the racist and anti-

Semitic “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory, which inspired the May 14 murder of 10 black people in Buffalo, United States by a fascist wearing an insignia used by the Azov Battalion.

The promotion of race-based bigotry by the Tories, who gave prominent positions to far-right filth like Young, is politely passed over by the CST, which propagates the lie that the threat of anti-Semitism comes from the left and political opponents of Israeli brutalisation of the Palestinians. As the ADL report pointed out regarding the growing white supremacist network, “Many of them blame Jews for non-white immigration and accuse Jews of undermining ‘white European culture.’ They also express hatred of Muslims for ‘polluting’ that culture.”

The danger of anti-Semitism can only be fought in recognition of that fact, in a struggle against imperialism which has armed and promoted far-right forces.

Despite the NUS’s own characteristic speedy capitulation, appointing a QC to conduct an inquiry into itself and Dallali, the Tory government has shown no signs of backing off, confirming that it wants a freer hand to dictate what can be said on campuses. Without any adaptation to the generally rotten politics of the NUS, this anti-democratic attack must be opposed by all students and workers.



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