

British government intensifies school and campus clampdown under guise of combating “antisemitism”

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The Conservative government’s criminalisation of opposition in Britain to Israel’s genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza is escalating.

Continuing to slander anti-Zionist views as “antisemitism”, Higher Education Minister Robert Halfon announced in February that an “Expert Adviser on antisemitism in Higher Education” will be appointed.

In an interview with *Times Higher Education*, Halfon said that “action against antisemitism needs to come from within” and complained that, so far, university vice-chancellors have been merely reactive in their curbing of free speech instead of being proactive.

As an example of the type of “antisemitic” actions Halfon had in mind, he said he was “distressed” that Jewish students “have to walk past posters saying Israel is committing genocide” and that there are demonstrations with protesters saying, “Zionists off campus”. He continued, “That’s why the secretary of state [for education] and I have written twice to universities on this. And why we’re looking to introduce an antisemitism charter to give teeth to the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.”

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition is an anti-democratic construct, designed to paint political anti-Zionism and opposition to the Israeli state’s persecution of the Palestinians as anti-Jewish hatred. It was successfully deployed by a cabal within the Labour and Tory parties, in league with Zionist organisations and the intelligence agencies, in the campaign to slander and eventually remove Jeremy Corbyn from the Labour leadership, after he had allowed the Blairites to expel or drive out thousands of his supporters on trumped up charges or allegations.

In 2020, then Education Secretary Gavin Williamson pressured UK universities into adopting the definition.

In the current frenzied atmosphere that dominates in British political circles, as they back Israel’s war crimes to the hilt, merely adopting the definition no longer suffices. More efforts must be made to enforce it as strictly as possible to eliminate all dissent.

Exactly what this means was outlined by Lord Mann, John Mann, the former Labour MP (2001-2019) and “left antisemitism” witch-hunter who, after leaving the House of Commons became “Adviser to UK Government on Antisemitism”. He told the pro-Tory *Telegraph* that students involved in “antisemitic” incidents should be kicked out. As an example, he cited an instance of a Jewish student centre being sprayed with graffiti saying, “Free Palestine”.

The targeting of individual students was confirmed by Professor Adam Habib, director of University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), who told *Times Higher Education* that he has received letters from ministers asking him to “act against a group of student leaders that we don’t like for these particular reasons.”

As opposition to Israel’s onslaught has intensified left-wing SOAS students have been targeted by a pro-Israel police dragnet.

In a measure of just how unhinged the accusations have become, Baroness Foster, a Tory member of the House of Lords was forced to pay damages to an Oxford University student after Foster maliciously accused her of antisemitism on X/Twitter. Foster claimed, Malika Gorgianeh, a doctoral student in astrophysics, displayed a “disgusting” antisemitic “octopus symbol” when appearing on the BBC’s University Challenge. The stuffed toy was in fact her team’s chosen mascot. She was also accused of wearing a jacket displaying the colours of the Palestinian flag. It was in fact navy blue, orange, pink

and green. The Palestinian flag's colours are red, black, green and white. Foster called for Gorgianeh to be expelled by her university and arrested by the police. She has been forced to issue a public apology and pay substantial damages.

In early November, Science Minister Michelle Donelan called for UKRI (UK Research and Innovation—an independent public body that funds and directs academic research in the UK) to shut down its equality committee after some of its members showed solidarity with the Palestinians on social media.

Asked about this incident, Halfon said that Donelan had “done the right thing”, and “We have to give a signal that we will not tolerate antisemitism in any shape or form—not just with the law but also with the spirit of the law”.

The latest initiatives were spurred by a report issued last month by the Zionist Community Security Trust (CST), claiming there was a “huge increase” in antisemitism in Britain since the October 7 Hamas-led incursion into Israel. The CST claimed that antisemitism was rife in education at all levels, in school classrooms and on campuses, with 325 incidents in schools and 182 on campus—a 300 percent increase.

Many of the “incidents” the CST records involve opposition to the state of Israel, rather than antisemitism. Even shouting “Free Palestine” during demonstrations or using the terms “Zionism” or “Zionist” are deemed instances of antisemitic behaviour.

In a choreographed response, on February 16, just 24 hours after the CST report was published, the *Daily Telegraph* announced that a “University anti-Semitism tsar” would “be appointed as Jewish students face death threats. The Government will create a post of Expert Adviser on anti-Semitism in Higher Education to tackle hatred on campus.”

Halfon commented that the CST’s figures were “deeply concerning”, adding, “To see this form of hatred also take place in education is unacceptable.

“I have contacted all vice-chancellors—reaching out to many personally—to ask them step up and crack down on antisemitism on university campuses.

“The government has been clear that hate crime on any kind will not be tolerated and anyone found to have committed it will face the full force of the law.”

This offensive was all the more critical for the government due to the February 5 ruling by an employment tribunal that Professor David Miller was wrongly sacked for his anti-Zionist political beliefs. It found that University of Bristol was guilty of “direct

discrimination” against Miller, contrary to Section 13 of the Equality Act, both in its decision to dismiss him on October 1, 2021, and in its rejection of his appeal against dismissal on February 23, 2022.

Miller’s was the first successful challenge in Britain to the campaign of manufactured allegations of “left antisemitism”. Halfon confirmed that there were serious discussions taking place “at the highest levels of government” about the result of the tribunal.

He also revealed that the government plans to introduce a “seal of quality” awarded only to universities that adhere to “the highest standards in dealing with anti-Semitism”, i.e., where the IHRA definition is used to punish and censor as many students or faculty members holding oppositional views as possible.

A new £5.5 million contract was released last month for a government supplier to propagate the IHRA definition in schools and universities. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced that Jewish schools, synagogues, and other community centres will also receive a £72 million security package. The figure includes £54 million of new funding for the Community Security Trust, in addition to the almost £100 million the government has handed over in various grants and awards.

The capitalist class is deathly afraid of the increasing radicalization of the working class by the Israeli genocide in Gaza. It seeks to crush this with the full force of the law and will spare no expense to do it.

On March 1, Sunak delivered his now infamous speech outside Number 10 describing the recent election of George Galloway, on an explicitly pro-Palestine and anti-genocide platform, as “beyond alarming” and the result of “extremism”. In the same speech he pledged, “We will redouble our support for the Prevent programme to stop young minds being poisoned by extremism. We will demand that universities stop extremist activity on campus.”

The anti-democratic Prevent strategy is enforced in schools and throughout the public sector under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and used to demonise Muslims in particular.



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