

Pro-Zionist Board of Deputies of British Jews calls for workplace “antisemitism” training

Jean Shaoul
22 July 2025

The Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD) has published a report calling for antisemitism training to be included in equality and diversity training in the arts, education, the National Health Service (NHS), police, professional bodies and trade unions. The proposed training explicitly equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism.

The BoD claims that training is necessary because a report by the Zionist and state-funded Community Security Trust found there had been an “onslaught” of antisemitic attacks on Britain’s Jews since October 7, 2023. This claim has been faithfully echoed across the mainstream media, from the *Telegraph* to the *Guardian* and BBC.

The report is yet another back-door attempt to outlaw all expression of opposition to Israel’s criminal war of annihilation of the Palestinians, under the guise of “equality and diversity”, circumventing the need for additional legislation.

“Antisemitism training” would be based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism that falsely equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism. The IHRA cites as an example of antisemitism: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.” The BoD was a key player in getting the IHRA definition adopted by Britain’s then Conservative government and public authorities in 2016.

Yet the stated purpose of Israel’s 2018 Nation State Law is to legitimise a system of institutional and constitutional discrimination that enforces Jewish supremacy over the Palestinians in all the land Israel controls. Every leading international human rights group, including Israel’s B’Tselem, agree that Israel is an “apartheid regime”.

The pro-Zionist Board purports to represent Britain’s Jews. It does no such thing. It consists of around 350 Deputies, each nominated as “representatives” by synagogues and other Jewish groups around the UK. Making an occasional “criticism” of the worst excesses by Israel in Gaza, it marries this always to denunciations of Hamas.

The BoD does not represent the Jews in Britain who are

deeply disturbed by the expansion of Israel’s illegal settlements, the 17-year blockade of Gaza, and the killing of over 60,000 Palestinians, two-thirds of whom are women and children, in the ongoing genocide. It does not speak for all those Jews who oppose the massive and deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, the starvation of Gaza’s civilian population and the brutal military occupation and human rights abuses in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Thousands of British Jews, and many Jewish organisations, have joined anti-war demonstrations across Britain.

Just weeks ago, the BoD suspended six of the 36 Deputies who had written an open letter published in the *Financial Times* that was highly critical of Israel’s unilateral ending of the ceasefire and its resumption of the war. Thirty rabbis from Reformist and Liberal synagogues wrote to the *Financial Times* that they too could “no longer turn a blind eye or remain silent”. These letters speak to the vast social, political and moral chasm that separates the BoD from the Jews it claims to represent.

The BoD played a leading role in the witch hunt against supposed “left antisemitism”. It campaigned for the introduction of an Anti-Boycott Bill in Parliament, seeking to prevent public bodies from withdrawing investments on ethical grounds, to oppose environmental and human rights abuses, including the boycott of products from Israeli settlements. The Bill did not become law as it failed to complete the legislative process before the July 2024 general election.

On assuming office in 2024, BoD President Phil Rosenberg recruited a Campaigns Officer and launched the Commission on Antisemitism, to be led by the Government’s Independent Advisor on Antisemitism Lord John Mann (formerly John Walney, a Labour MP) and former Tory Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt.

Mann spearheaded the near decade-long campaign by the Labour Party’s Blairite wing targeting supporters of former leader Jeremy Corbyn. It was Mann who started the offensive, sparking a televised row with Ken Livingstone in

2016, calling him a “Nazi apologist”, and which led eventually to Corbyn’s leading supporter being thrown out of the Labour Party. Corbyn’s refusal to oppose the witch-hunt saw his supporters targeted wholesale and expelled, smoothing the path to the IHRA’s pro-Zionist definition of antisemitism being adopted in full by Labour in September 2018.

Awarded a peerage in 2019 by Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, Mann was made the government’s “Antisemitism Tsar” by her successor, Boris Johnson. His 2023 report successfully campaigned for universities to adopt the IHRA definition, paving the way for an even tighter crackdown on opposition to Israel and pro-Palestinian speech.

The Community Security Trust’s (CST) survey of antisemitism, whose methodology and results are not reported, was spawned decades ago as an offshoot of the BoD by businessman and convicted criminal Gerald Ronson. It is recognised as a charity but is funded largely and generously by the government—ostensibly to provide safety, security, and advice to the Jewish community on antisemitism and in countering anti-Zionism. Its 2024 report found 43 percent of antisemitic incidents involved anti-Zionism. In 355 instances, the phrase “Free Palestine” was said to constitute antisemitism.

The CST provided no detail about the individual acts of antisemitism, or the views of interviewees who shaped the report. Its claim that antisemitism has soared in the arts and culture, where Jews have traditionally been well represented, is part of an escalating campaign to repress widespread support for the Palestinians.

In the CST’s sights are signatories to numerous open letters including writers, musicians and actors, demanding an end to the Israeli government’s genocidal war in Gaza and calling on Prime Minister Keir Starmer to end support for Israel. The antisemitism slander has already led to the cancellation of countless pro-Palestinian exhibitions and cultural events at the behest of Zionist organisations. These cancellations have met stiff resistance, including protests by staff and patrons, such as those at the Barbican and British Museum. Artists, creative practitioners and curators have written open letters accusing cultural institutions of “repressing, silencing and stigmatising Palestinian voices and perspectives”.

The BoD’s report calls for cultural institutions to leverage the use of “contract compliance” wherever public sector organisations or companies in the private sector are financially involved with the venue, to ensure that events or artefacts meet the IHRA definition and exclude those that evince any opposition to Israel.

The BoD’s Commission on Antisemitism report makes

several recommendations including the creation of an “Antisemitism Training Qualification” for all those carrying out training on contemporary antisemitism and the inclusion of education on antisemitism/anti-Zionism in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) programs.

One of its most disturbing recommendations is the call to recognise Judaism as an ethnicity as well as a religion, in a bid to bolster claims for a Jewish State. This is manifestly nonsense, as the ethnic diversity among Israeli Jews testifies. Emeritus professor of history at Tel Aviv University Shlomo Sand argues in his book *The Invention of the Jewish People* that most Jews descend from converts, centuries and sometimes millennia ago. Proselytism across disparate ethnic groups was widespread in the Roman period (with an estimated 8 million Jews in the world in the first century) and later, across the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe. The formation of a “Jewish nation” out of these disparate groups only developed with the rise of nationalism in the late 19th century.

The report also calls on the National Health Service to institute basic training on “contemporary antisemitism” (anti-Zionism) across every NHS Trust because of the “appalling experiences of antisemitism affecting Jewish staff and patients”. The BoD wants the NHS to ban the wearing of “symbols [that] include any form of badge/jewellery with the Palestinian flag, maps clearly intended to show a Palestinian State without an Israeli one, slogans mentioning, ‘From the River to the Sea’ and ‘Intifada’, or watermelon symbols” at work.

This has already brought a response from the government, with the *Jerusalem Post* reporting that NHS staff will soon be prohibited from wearing their uniforms to pro-Palestine protests and will not be allowed to wear pro-Palestine badges at work, according to a letter from Health Secretary Wes Streeting to the BoD.

The BoD has called for a ramping up of police action in dealing with “antisemitic crimes”, saying that police decision making and standards are “inconsistent”. It called for action against “groups that act as organised crime groups by calculatedly planning to cause damage to buildings, property and people”. Its demand for repressive legislation against protest has been realised with the proscription of Palestine Action, but the BoD is demanding a wider net be cast.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact