



Dissent in Labour Rises Following BBC Revelations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Dissent inside the British Labour Party has increased following the recent broadcast of a BBC Panorama documentary on antisemitism within the party's ranks. One-third of Labour members of the House of Lords published an advertisement attacking Corbyn's position on antisemitism. A great majority of Labour staff members accepted a motion against the party leadership's attitude toward employees. As many of Corbyn's opponents prefer to fight the ineffectiveness of Labour leadership on the antisemitism problem rather than leave the party, this internal battle is unlikely to go away any time soon.

The BBC Panorama [documentary](#) on antisemitism in the British Labour Party, broadcast on July 10, has unleashed a torrent of reactions. A number of these are important new developments. On one side in Labour remains party leader Jeremy Corbyn, those who do not want to fight antisemitism effectively (the "smokescreeners"), and the antisemitism whitewashers. On the other side are those who want to stamp out the party's institutional antisemitism.

Dissent inside the party significantly increased in the wake of the documentary. One spectacular sign of this was a [full-page ad](#) paid for by 67 Labour peers – several of them former ministers – in the left-wing daily, the *Guardian*. The signatories represent about one-third of all Labour Lords. They accused Corbyn of not having defended Labour's anti-racist values. The key line of the ad read: "The Labour Party welcomes everyone* irrespective of race, creed, gender identity, or sexual orientation (*except, it seems, Jews)." It added: "This is your legacy, Mr. Corbyn."

It is telling that these Labour peers did not write an open letter. They were apparently trying to maximize the audience for their dissent on the party's

antisemitism. Quotes from the ad were picked up by a variety of other British media outlets.

An additional front of dissent has opened up between Labour staff and party leadership. Staff members affiliated with the major GMB trade union voted 124 in favor, with only four against, for a motion condemning the Labour press office's response to the BBC documentary. The motion said it was "unacceptable for an employee's workload or the culture of an organization to cause staff to have breakdowns or to contemplate suicide." (On the BBC program, several whistleblowers [claimed extreme stress](#) caused by party leadership.)

Baroness Hayter, Labour's Deputy Leader in the House of Lords, is one of the signatories on the peers' ad. [Hayter said](#) Corbyn's inner circle was behaving as in the last days of Hitler in his bunker, where "you stop receiving any information into the inner group which suggests that things are not going the way you want." A Labour spokesman described the comments as "deeply offensive."

Corbyn fired Baroness Hayter from the party's front bench, but [only the party's peers can sack her](#) as Deputy Labour leader in the House of Lords. There, [Hayter remains sitting](#) on Labour's front bench, flouting Corbyn's decision.

Lord Mandelson, a former Labour minister who has also been a European Commissioner, said he feels "dirty" staying in a Labour Party in which "no effective action" is being taken against people holding antisemitic views.

As a reaction to the peers' advertisement, a local Labour party [expelled](#) one of its signatories, Lady Armstrong. She was Chief Whip under PM Tony Blair. This was a symbolic vote, as only the Labour leadership can expel party members. Shadow justice minister MP Gloria Depiero, who left Labour's front bench, announced that she would [not be standing](#) at the next general election as the party has a "lack of tolerance."

MP Dame Margaret Hodge wrote an [article](#) in the *Guardian* in which she wrote that one year had passed since a face-to-face encounter with Corbyn in the parliament's lobby in which she called the Labour leader "a racist" and an "antisemite." Hodge wrote that her politics have been defined by her Jewish identity in a way that she never imagined. She added that she never thought she would ever be a victim of Jew-hatred from the hard left. Hodge wrote that in the year that has passed, the situation within the party has deteriorated dramatically and the antisemitism crisis in Labour has spiraled out of control.

Former Labour PM Tony Blair was [asked in a BBC interview](#) whether he would vote for the party in elections amid the rows on Brexit and antisemitism. Referring to the antisemitism issue, Blair indicated that it would be difficult.

Matthew Turner, head of the Labour Campaign for Human Rights, [said](#) there is currently a real and ongoing issue of antisemitism within the party. He said, "We must now take the fight to antisemitism within our own ranks. We cannot ignore it or fail to deal with it properly."

The National Executive Committee of Labour (NEC) is backing a proposal by Corbyn to fast-track expulsions of members in the most serious antisemitism cases. It was decided that a new internal panel should be set up to take up rapid action against the worst offenders. The shadow cabinet is also backing this proposal. Yet Labour Deputy Leader Tom Watson [wants](#) automatic expulsion of party members only where there is "irrefutable evidence of racism and discrimination." In the meantime, a page of information on antisemitism has been added to the party's website.

The parliamentary head of the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), MP Ruth Smeeth, [said](#), "There is still no independence. In fact, arguably political power over antisemitism cases is going to be consolidated by political supporters of Jeremy Corbyn." Mike Katz, the JLM Chair, [said](#), "Nothing short of a fully independent process, first asked for by the Jewish community way back in April 2018, is even going to begin to suggest that the party leadership really cares about tackling institutional anti-Jewish racism."

Dave Rich of the Jewish defense organization Community Security Trust (CST) [wrote](#): "Labour still talks about antisemitism as a problem of 'a small number' of members with the wrong ideas, who can be persuaded to change their views with a leaflet and a video or two. In fact it is a problem of political culture and institutional racism, and a leadership that wants us to believe they can turn the problem around without ever addressing their own role in creating it."

The antisemitism debate is apparently hampering pro-Palestinian activism and extreme attacks on Israel in Labour. This was made clear in an earlier [article](#) by former minister Peter Hain. Another former minister, Clare Short, a fanatical anti-Israel inciter, [wrote a letter](#) to the *Financial Times* claiming that the root of the antisemitism problem is the "growing awareness, injustice and suffering inflicted by Israel on the Palestinians." As usual among the extremist lookers away of major Palestinian criminality, there wasn't a word in her letter about the genocidal intentions of the largest Palestinian party, Hamas, and the glorification of the murder of Israeli civilians by the Palestinian Authority.

Labour has made public the information that 625 antisemitic complaints were received during the first six months of 2019, and that a total of eight party members have been expelled.

Over the past three years, [it has become clear](#) that under Corbyn's leadership, Labour has become institutionally antisemitic. A report from CST found that the number of antisemitic incidents in Britain rose in the first half of 2019, and it stated that antisemitism in the Labour Party was a contributing factor.

Jewish activist David Collier compiled a report that concludes: "The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader in September 2015 established the toxic environment which enabled the growth of rampant anti-Zionist hostility and inevitably antisemitism." Collier also discovered a "clear pattern" supporting the "general assumption" by commentators that "the Labour party was invaded by extremists when Jeremy Corbyn became leader."

Nevertheless, a substantial percentage of the Labour membership remains at least partly in denial about Corbyn's role in causing all this. A [poll by The Times](#) found that 70% of Labour members admitted that antisemitism was a genuine problem in the party, but only 48% believe Corbyn has fared either fairly badly or very badly on the issue. Only 27% agreed that Corbyn should step down. More than 80% thought he had the right leadership priorities for the country.

The party is thus [full of supporters](#) of Corbyn – a man who has called genocidal antisemitic terrorists "friends" and "brothers" and is himself an antisemite. Yet many of those opposed to the party leadership's lack of desire to confront antisemitism prefer to fight within the party rather than leave it. The battle over antisemitism in the party is thus unlikely to go away in the near future.

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