

A Labour of Hate:

The role of anti-Zionist
antisemitism in Labour's
historic 2019 defeat

JANUARY 6, 2020

DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY FOR ISRAEL



**DEMOCRATIC
MAJORITY
FOR ISRAEL**
EST. 2019
THE VOICE OF PRO-ISRAEL DEMOCRATS

INTRODUCTION

Last month's British election saw the Labour Party suffering its worst defeat in 84 years, losing to the Conservatives and garnering just 32% of the vote, to the Tories' 43%. While several issues, including Brexit, played central roles in Labour's loss, the campaign dialogue, the poll data, and the post-election analyses make clear that the anti-Zionist antisemitism displayed by Labour, and its current Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, played a key role in the party's stunning defeat — a conclusion endorsed by British analysts on all sides.

A few (thankfully, *just* a few) U.S. Democrats have put Corbyn on a pedestal and expressed a desire for our party to follow the path he traversed, including his anti-Zionist antisemitism. While such a move would be morally reprehensible, the British election results strongly suggest it would also be politically suicidal.

BACKGROUND

U.K. General Election

On December 12, the United Kingdom held its third General Election in four years. After failing to approve Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit deal with the European Union, Parliament granted the Prime Minister's request to hold an early election, originally scheduled for 2022. Johnson, who suffered a series of defeats in Parliament and in the U.K.'s Supreme Court since becoming Prime Minister in July, hoped to gain a working majority to pass his Brexit deal and end gridlock.

In the opposition, the Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn since 2015, ran on a promise to increase funding for the National Health Service (NHS). Unfortunately, Corbyn's history of supporting antisemitism, inviting extreme anti-Israel and antisemitic voices into his party's ranks, and promoting the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) Movement, played a critical role in Labour's historic loss to one of the most incompetent British governments in modern history.

Antisemitic & anti-Israel actions were frequent under Corbyn's leadership

Since Corbyn became leader, the U.K.'s Labour Party has been beset with allegations of antisemitism, from both outside observers and from party members within. Corbyn came to Leadership with a long track record of anti-Zionist antisemitism:

- In 2002, Corbyn signed a document calling for the boycott of Israel, accusing Israel of apartheid, and robbing Palestinian land with the help of America's "unlimited support to the Zionist perpetrators of genocidal crimes against the Palestinian people."
- In 2012, Corbyn forcefully defended a publicly funded, antisemitic mural in London depicting Jewish bankers counting their money around a Monopoly board.
- In 2013, Corbyn claimed that British Zionists, "having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives... don't understand English irony, either," comments that many interpreted as meaning that Jews don't belong there.
- In 2014, Corbyn participated in a wreath-laying ceremony in Tunisia at the graves of the terrorists who massacred 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Summer Olympics in 1972.
- Corbyn attended events for an organization founded by self-proclaimed Holocaust denier Paul Eisen.
- Corbyn called Hezbollah and Hamas "friends," despite the fact that they are terrorist organizations that refuse to make peace with Israel and are committed to its destruction.
- In December, Corbyn had to be asked three times in one [BBC](#) interview before he conceded that it was antisemitic to say that "Rothschild's Zionists run Israel and world governments." He was also repeatedly pressed to apologize to the British Jewish Community.

Under Corbyn, Labour has become the political home of many of the most ardent anti-Israel voices in Great Britain. During its latest conference, Labour delegates voted to reject any trade agreements with Israel and to boycott certain Israeli products. This summer, political scientist David Collier submitted a [report](#) to the country's official Equality and Human Rights Commission that found Corbyn had "radicalized" party members into becoming "obsessed" with Israel.

Labour's failure to address antisemitism in its ranks

The Labour Party also came under intense scrutiny for its failure to act in the face of hundreds of antisemitic incidents by its members and leadership. Just last week, British media [reported](#) that the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) collected sworn testimony from 70 current and ex-Labour Party officials regarding antisemitic incidents at party meetings, events, and offices. The testimonies will be delivered to Britain's Equality and Human Rights Commission as part of that body's investigation into unlawful antisemitic acts within the Labour Party.

JLM, which has been associated with Labour since 1903, [stated](#) that even as new incidents occur “on a daily basis,” Labour Party leadership “finds more ways of ignoring, denying, relativizing and accepting the antisemitism that has consumed it.” Some of the most troubling incidents the report cites include:

- Numerous examples of antisemitic abuse at party meetings, including members who were called “child killer,” “Zio scum,” “Dirty Zionist,” and “Tory Jew.”
- A north London membership secretary objecting to 25 ultra-Orthodox Jewish membership applications, requiring visits to their homes before approval.
- At a party meeting, members defended a fellow member who claimed that “the over-representation of Jews in the capitalist ruling class... gives the Israel-Zionist lobby its power.”
- After a Jewish councilor lost re-election, a member told them to “go home and count” their money.
- Two party delegates were heard calling Jews “subhuman,” who “didn’t deserve to be allowed to define what constitutes antisemitism” and should be “grateful we don’t make them eat bacon...”
- A former Corbyn staffer called criticism of Labour Party member Ken Livingstone, who claimed Hitler supported Zionism “before he went mad,” a “Jewish conspiracy.”

Equally disturbing – in this and previous [reports](#) – are allegations of delay, interference, and inaction by Corbyn’s office when made aware of antisemitic incidents. For example, Labour leaders [threatened](#) ex-party staff members with legal action for blowing the whistle on antisemitism within Labour. What’s more, despite claims of impartiality, the Leader’s office intervened in more than 10% of investigations. *The Atlantic* [summed](#) up the report’s findings in April:

“Out of 863 alleged incidents detailed in the files, only 29 resulted in a party member being expelled; 145 resulted in a “formal warning”—which is largely meaningless—and 191 cases were resolved as requiring no action. The rest, the *[Sunday] Times* reports, are unresolved, including 249 that haven’t even been opened.”

The combination of Corbyn’s antisemitic record and Labour’s inability or unwillingness to address antisemitic incidents, led Britain’s Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, to pen an [Op-Ed](#) calling Jeremy Corbyn unfit for high office. Mirvis, who had never previously waded into British politics and did not endorse another candidate, reported that “the overwhelming majority of British Jews are gripped by anxiety” at the thought of a Corbyn government, which is “understandable and justified.” Following the Chief

Rabbi's piece, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Muslim Council of Britain, and the British Hindu Council all issued statements supporting Rabbi Mirvis.

DELETERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Labour's anti-Zionist antisemitism led directly to a series of consequences that badly mauled the party and its image:

More than a dozen Labour Members of Parliament resigned because of Labour's antisemitism

It's difficult for a political party to retain legitimacy when its own elected officials are resigning in protest over its policies – but that's exactly what happened to Labour. In the past 10 months, [thirteen MPs](#) and [three peers](#) resigned from the Labour Party over anti-Israel and antisemitic policies and incidents within the party. Only five of them were Jewish. In addition, a substantial number of Labour Members of the European Parliament, councilors and rank-and-file members also resigned their Party memberships for the same reason.

In her resignation [letter](#), MP Louise Ellman wrote, "Under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership antisemitism has become mainstream in the Labour Party, Jewish members have been bullied, abused and driven out. Antisemites have felt comfortable and vile conspiracy theories have been propagated. A party that permits anti-Jewish racism to flourish cannot be called anti-racist." Another former Labour MP, Joan Ryan, who left the party this year, said recently that Corbyn's Labour Party "now seeks to demonize and delegitimize Israel" and warned Americans to "call out politicians, from whatever side of the aisle, who question Israel's right to exist and engage in vile antisemitic tropes about the loyalties of British or American Jews to their countries."

British thought leaders turned against Labour

British thought leaders, including writer John Le Carré, novelist Fay Weldon, Wikipedia Founder Jimmy Wales, Spider-Man actor Tom Holland, counter-extremism activist Maajid Nawaz, and faith leader Fiyaz Mughal authored a public letter to the pro-Labour [Guardian](#) announcing they could not vote Labour either: "The coming election is momentous for every voter, but for British Jews it contains a particular anguish: the prospect of a prime minister steeped in association with antisemitism." The writers continued, "But antisemitism is central to a wider debate about the kind of country we want to be. To ignore it because Brexit looms larger is to declare that anti-Jewish prejudice is a price worth paying for a Labour government."

Jewish support for the Labour Party

Until recently, many British Jews felt comfortable supporting the Labour Party, owing to its history of fighting for the working class, improving Britain's NHS, and its previous perception as anti-racist. In the run-up to the [2016 General Election](#), Jewish support for Corbyn's Labour Party had fallen to 13%, with 77% planning to vote for the Conservatives. In October, a similar poll of British Jews [found](#) that their support for Labour had fallen to a paltry 6%, with 64% planning to vote for the Conservatives and 24% for the Liberal Democrats.

[The 2019 Antisemitism Barometer](#) poll conducted by YouGov/King's College found that 84% of British Jews felt Corbyn was a threat to Jews. Troublingly, a full 40% of British Jews have considered emigrating from the U.K. over the past two years due to antisemitism, with two-thirds mentioning Corbyn or the Labour Party as their primary reason.

Labour's antisemitism was a major element of the press dialogue about the campaign

During the campaign, Labour's anti-Zionist antisemitism became a favorite topic of the press, which headlined the issue regularly, creating a toxic environment for Labour, a crisis of confidence in Corbyn's leadership, and a PR disaster for the party.

the guardian

Jewish Labour Movement no longer backs own party

Labour has let poison of antisemitism take root, says chief rabbi

Ephraim Mirvis says Jews have justified anxiety over prospect of Jeremy Corbyn election win

Concerns about antisemitism mean we cannot vote Labour

To endorse Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister would be to surrender in the fight against anti-Jewish prejudice, say 24 signatories including **John le Carré, Fay Weldon, Joanna Lumley and William Boyd**

Labour antisemitism row may affect election result, says McDonnell

Shadow chancellor says sorry to Jewish community, adding party was 'doing everything possible' to tackle issue

Section: GDN IN PaGe: 1 Edition Date: 191127 Edition: 01 Zone: S Sent at 26/11/2019 22:00

cYasmaGenta

Corbyn struggles to rebuff antisemitism accusations

Labour has let poison of antisemitism take root, says chief rabbi

Concerns about antisemitism mean we cannot vote Labour

Labour antisemitism row may affect election result, says McDonnell

Shadow chancellor says sorry to Jewish community, adding party was 'doing everything possible' to tackle issue

Jewish Labour Movement no longer backs own party

Judge bans anti-LGBT protesters near school

Malta murder: Ministers quit amid inquiry into killing

Seventy Labour staffers give statements to antisemitism inquiry

Jewish Labour Movement's leaked EHRC submission says party is in 'dangerous place'

'Anyone but Corbyn': Jewish voters turn away from Labour

How Jewish voters across country are rejecting party once seen as their political home

The Atlantic

IDEAS

The Implosion of Jeremy Corbyn

The leader of the Labour Party not only has failed to confront anti-Semitism, but seems unable to acknowledge it as a problem.

APRIL 12, 2019

Nicky Woolf

GLOBAL

Why British Jews Are Worried by Jeremy Corbyn

Has denying the reality of anti-Semitism become a left-wing loyalty test?

HELEN LEWIS 1:00 AM ET



The Telegraph

Jeremy Corbyn refuses to apologise four times for anti-Semitism and says Chief Rabbi is wrong

There is a 'powerful case' that Jeremy Corbyn could be anti-Semitic, says former most senior civil judge



Corbyn criticised over handling of anti-Semitism cases

Luciana Berger: 'I went from being a Labour MP to being a Jewish MP'



Will anti-Semitism accusations sink Corbyn and the Labour Party?

"People want to excuse it by saying these are small numbers, but what happened to the principle that one racist is one too many?"

In August, a YouGov report on the election concluded, "Most of the summer have been dominated by stories of anti-Semitism in the press, with the spotlight falling on the past behaviour of Labour members and Jeremy Corbyn..."

Days before the election, NBC offered a similar analysis of the press coverage: "Social inequality, resolving Brexit, investment in the struggling National Health Service — these are some of the issues Britain's opposition Labour Party had hoped would top the agenda during the election campaign. Instead, the party is mired in a continuing anti-Semitism crisis amid accusations that it has mismanaged bigotry among its own members ahead of the Dec. 12 vote" (emphasis added).

Polls made clear Labour antisemitism was a key issue for voters, writ large

Large swaths of the British electorate were convinced antisemitism was a serious problem for Labour. A [Deltapoll survey](#) found 47% of voters believing Labour and/or Corbyn were antisemitic, with just 21% saying neither were. [Another 2019 poll](#) found that 51% thought Labour had an antisemitism problem with only 18% saying it did not. Another 31% didn't know.

A [survey](#) for *The Independent* revealed that just 9% believed Labour had handled allegations of antisemitism within the party's ranks "well," while 60% did not, and 30% said they did not know.

Indeed, U.K. voters were more likely to believe Labour had a racism problem than to believe the same about the pro-Brexit, anti-immigrant Tories. Overall, 40% stated that the Labour Party has a problem with racism and/or racial prejudice, compared to 31% who held that view of the Tories.

The electoral impact was unmistakable in the data. Twenty-eight percent of voters claim they would have been more likely to vote for the Labour Party and Corbyn had they better addressed antisemitism.

Deltapoll found antisemitism rivaled Brexit as a reason for people turning away from Labour: among voters who supported Labour in 2017 and were undecided about voting Labour in 2019, 16% named antisemitism as one reason, with 19% naming Brexit.

Analysts on all sides agree that Labour's antisemitism was a key factor in its defeat

Dave Prentis, the General Secretary of UNISON – the U.K.'s largest union, serving more than 1.3 million public service workers – saw the problem as early as last August when he wrote, "This issue [antisemitism] is already costing Labour votes, as I saw for myself when campaigning in Barnet this year. And it's costing us the moral high ground from which to oppose all forms of racial hatred and oppression" (emphasis added).

After the election, pro-Labour columnist Polly Toynbee opined, "Corbyn came weighted with baggage too heavy for a Hercules to shift: the IRA, the Hamas friends, Venezuela. But antisemitism was [an] accusation he could not shift. I am certain he sees no stain of it in himself, refusing to comprehend it, and so could not apologise. Failure to purge every case left candidates on the doorstep dumbstruck when anyone said 'I can't vote for an anti-Semite'" (emphasis added).

BBC's Political Editor Laura Kuenssberg concluded, "Voters have cared about the anti-Semitism issue beyond the Jewish community," while Tony Blair's former press secretary, Alastair Campbell, [similarly maintained](#) antisemitism had played a big part in Labour's rout.

Examining the facets of Corbyn's unpopularity, George Eaton, Assistant Editor of *The New Statesman*, concluded, "the scandal of anti-Semitism wounded his claim to moral authority..."

One journalist [quoted](#) a Labour staffer who disputed the idea that the loss was mainly about Brexit: "The one thing that came up time and time again from voters - Corbyn. Whether that was his support of the IRA, [his antisemitism](#) or limited grasp of economics. He was the problem" (emphasis added).

A set of *Guardian* interviews with losing Labour candidates reached a similar conclusion: "Many former and aspiring MPs who failed to win on Thursday have told the Guardian that Labour's outgoing leader and his views were the biggest single factor that contributed to their downfall. A complicated Brexit policy, [a failure to tackle antisemitism](#) and even the party's failing political machinery were also contributing factors to the worst result for Labour since 1935, they said" (emphasis added).

Former Labour Whip Graham Jones, who lost his seat in the 2019 election, described seeing once-reliable Labour voters turn against the party, saying, "Four out of five voters would not vote for Corbyn and his policies. One wouldn't vote for him because he was scruffy; [the next person wouldn't vote for him because of antisemitism in the party; the next because of connections with Hamas](#); and the next because he seemed unable to lead. On one road, you might get the full set," (emphasis added).

London's Labour mayor, Sadiq Khan, wrote on Facebook the day after the election that "Labour's shocking and repeated failure to tackle anti-Semitism, and our inability to put forward a credible and believable set of priorities for governing have made a major contribution to the scale of this defeat."

The New Yorker described the role of anti-Zionist antisemitism in Labour's historic defeat succinctly (emphasis added):

The staggering large-scale defeat of Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party had many causes, but the [toxin of anti-Semitism within Labour was clearly one of them](#)... This was, to be sure, a different kind of anti-Semitism, one rooted in a hatred of the injustices seen to be inflicted by the Jewish state of Israel more than in classic European anti-Semitism. But it is a form of anti-Zionism that passes beyond the boundaries of acceptable—indeed, essential—criticism of Israel to become a kind of mono-causal paranoia.

Labour won't win again until it works out why it lost

Gary Younge



It's not enough to blame Jeremy Corbyn, Brexit or the media. The picture is far more complex than that

working. His refusal to apologise to the Jewish community for antisemitism when interviewed by Andrew Neil was baffling, not least because he had apologised several times before - and did so again afterwards with Phillip Schofield. And the media are

Corbyn, antisemitism and Brexit: Labour MPs on why they lost

Rajeev Syal, Rowena Mason, Heather Stewart and Frances Perraudin

Tue 17 Dec 2019 16:03 EST

Former and aspiring candidates said outgoing leader and his views were the biggest factor

Graham Jones, the former Labour whip, said the campaign became so bad in his constituency of Hyndburn that canvassers began to play a form of "Corbyn bingo" as they counted the votes leaking away from usual Labour supporters.

Vox

The fall of Jeremy Corbyn

Why Labour lost — and what it means for Britain.

By Zack Beauchamp | @zackbeauchamp | zack@vox.com | Dec 13, 2019, 10:00am EST

the public. He also presided over a significant rise in anti-Semitism in the party's ranks; he had recently been condemned by the leading Jewish Labour organization for turning their party into "a welcoming refuge for anti-Semites."

Devoid of agility, charisma and credibility, Corbyn has led Labour into the abyss

Polly Toynbee



Yes, the manifesto was magnificent. But Corbyn has allowed his party to be riven by sectarianism, antisemitism and Brexit

Fri 13 Dec 2019 02:51 EST

Corbyn came weighted with baggage too heavy for a Hercules to shift: the IRA, the Hamas friends, Venezuela. But antisemitism was accusation he could not shift. I am certain he sees no stain of it in himself, refusing to comprehend it, and so could not apologise. Failure to purge every case left candidates on the doorstep dumbstruck when anyone said "I can't vote for an antisemite". And remember that early refusal to

"Four out five voters would not vote for Corbyn and his policies. Door one wouldn't vote for him because he was scruffy; the next person wouldn't vote for him because of antisemitism in the party; the next because of connections with Hamas; and the next because he seemed unable to lead. On one road, you might get the full set," he said.

Jeremy Corbyn will resign as party leader after Labour's crushing defeat

He said he would not lead the party in a future election campaign.

By Jen Kirby | jen.kirby@vox.com | Updated Dec 13, 2019, 2:36pm EST

Labour had other problems, too. There have been major instances of anti-Semitism within the ranks of the Labour Party since Corbyn's rise to power. That has led some critics to accuse him of allowing anti-Semitism to fester within the party, or at least of failing to do enough to condemn it and take seriously the very real concerns of Jewish lawmakers and others in the community.

Conclusion

Jeremy Corbyn and the U.K. Labour Party paid a heavy price for their anti-Zionist antisemitism in last month's election, as these issues played a significant role in Labour's broad and historic defeat.

Discussions of antisemitism captured the headlines, caused Labour elected officials to abandon their party, and led British opinion leaders to do likewise. While it was certainly not Labour's only liability, polls and post-election analyses from all sides confirm that Labour's antisemitism was a key factor in the party's collapse.

A very few Democrats have publicly identified Corbyn as their model and have even attempted to defend him against charges of antisemitism. Adopting Labour's anti-Zionist antisemitism would likely have the same (or even more) disastrous electoral consequences in the U.S. as it has had in the U.K.