



BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES AND ANTISEMITISM 2021

CAMPAIGN AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

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INTRODUCTION

With party conference season upon us, Campaign Against Antisemitism has undertaken a review of the state of Britain's major political parties vis-a-vis antisemitism, with particular focus on relevant developments over the past twelve months.

This review of the parties supplements our ongoing Antisemitism in Political Parties (AIPP) monitoring project, which documents specific cases of antisemitic conduct and how the parties have addressed them. AIPP can be accessed on our website.

The findings in this report are based not only on publicly available information but also on our own investigations and dealings with the parties (where those dealings have not been on a confidential basis), except in the case of the Labour Party, which is the only party that refuses to engage with us.

As this report shows, there is antisemitism in all political parties, be it expressed, enabled or ignored. But not all parties are equal offenders, with some improving over the years and others moving in the wrong direction. Others still try to tick boxes and say the right things but fail at times to take real action.

Growing concerns about the Green Party notwithstanding, Labour remains the only major party with a problem of institutional racism, as confirmed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) following our referral. It is astonishing that, despite being the complainant in the EHRC's investigation, the Labour Party is alone among national political parties in refusing to engage with us. Under its current leadership, Labour has taken welcome steps to tackle the Party's racism, but progress has been slow and unsteady. This year's

annual conference could be make-or-break for the Party, with the Jewish community and all decent Britons watching to see what kind of party Labour wants to be.

We will continue to monitor, expose and cooperate with all parties to educate on and stamp out antisemitism from our public life.



Campaign Against Antisemitism advocates for zero tolerance of antisemitism in public life. To that end we monitor all political parties and strive to ensure that any cases of concern are properly addressed.

CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST PARTY

There have been a number of cases over the past year where the Conservatives have sought to kick allegations of antisemitism into the long grass, promising investigations and then conducting them in secret, if at all, over long periods, seemingly in the hope that the problem is forgotten and enabling the Party to issue a mere slap on the wrist to the parliamentarians or councillors in question. We at Campaign Against Antisemitism do not forget, however, and we continue to call out the Conservatives over these failures.

Beyond the disciplinary processes themselves, concerns have been raised over the past year in relation to the use of certain tropes about 'elites' which, while not inherently antisemitic, have been used to stoke anti-Jewish sentiment within far-right circles in Britain, Europe and the United States. We continue to urge Conservative politicians to employ responsible language and make the context of their views clear to listeners, so that their remarks cannot be construed or misunderstood as endorsements of far-right positions.

At times, there can also be a mismatch between the national Party and local branches, with, for example, ministers repeatedly calling for local authorities to adopt the International Definition of Antisemitism but Conservative-led local councils falling behind in doing so.

Shortcomings notwithstanding, the Conservatives – both in their capacity as the party of Government and among backbenchers in Parliament – have been at the forefront of the fight against antisemitism in Britain and abroad, including being the first national government in the world to adopt the International Definition of Antisemitism and threatening the funding of local authorities and

universities that do not adopt it, as well as proscribing the neo-Nazi terrorist group National Action and the antisemitic genocidal terrorist organisation Hizballah, both following urging by Campaign Against Antisemitism and others.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson addresses Conservative party conference

We continue to work with the Government to advance the security of the Jewish community and to call out shortcomings in the Conservative Party.

GREEN PARTY OF ENGLAND AND WALES

The Green Party is the only major political party in England and Wales not to have adopted the International Definition of Antisemitism, and its sister branch in Scotland, the Scottish Greens, is likewise the only political party not to have done so north of the border. While the Green Party's outgoing leaders have supported its adoption, both in private conversations with Campaign Against Antisemitism and in their capacity as local councillors in London (where both their councils have adopted the Definition), the membership as a whole has failed to endorse the measure at a Party conference, as is required under Party rules.

While we continue to hold discussions with the Party's leadership, its disciplinary structures are amateurish and utterly deficient. It has minimal professional infrastructure and, unlike in other major parties, its members retain considerable control over policy. Its constitution has failed to keep up with the Party's electoral rise.



Sian Berry (right), Leader of the Green Party, with Jonathan Bartley, until recently her co-Leader

One symptom is the failure to adopt the Definition; another is the Party's woeful disciplinary process, which we have experienced firsthand. We have submitted numerous complaints to the Party over officeholders and candidates, only to find that

the complaints are ignored for long periods of time and then adjudicated against arbitrary standards or dismissed for novel constitutional reasons. The effect is that the Party has failed to take any real action against prominent members who have expressed antisemitic sentiments, including the Party's recent Equality and Diversity Coordinator who now holds the International Coordinator portfolio. Finding redress for racism against Jews in the Green Party is thus extremely difficult, and all the more worrying as the Party is also particularly vulnerable as a possible destination for far-left Labour members expelled over antisemitism.



Claudine Letsae, Green Party International Coordinator and former Equality and Diversity Coordinator

These shortcomings do not go unnoticed by the Jewish community. Our Antisemitism Barometer survey of British Jews late last year found that the Greens were second only to Labour in how many respondents felt that the Party was too tolerant of antisemitism (43%).

The Greens are currently holding a leadership election, with candidates taking different positions on whether and how to fight antisemitism in the Party. We continue to monitor this primary with interest, but we are mindful that unless the Party's internal procedures change, it may have a problem ever winning the trust of the Jewish community.

GREEN PARTY OF SCOTLAND

In Scotland, the Scottish Greens (Green Party of Scotland) hold more expressly virulent positions which we have publicised. In 2015, the Party adopted a motion, which has never been rescinded, condemning “Israel’s claim to be ‘the Jewish State’” and “Zionism as a racist ideology.” According to the International Definition 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)” is an example of antisemitism.



Patrick Harvie, co-Leader of the Scottish Greens

The motion also committed the Party to opposing “Aliyah” (Jewish immigration to Israel, including by British Jews) and Israel’s Law of Return, the Jewish state’s answer to centuries of persecution of diaspora Jewry. The motion further called for the removal of Hamas, an antisemitic genocidal terrorist organisation, from its designation by the British Government as a terrorist organisation, and supported the BDS movement — the campaign to boycott the Jewish state — the tactics of which an overwhelming majority of British Jews find intimidating.

The debate on this motion was held on a Saturday, when observant Jews would be unable to participate, and it passed easily. It became Party policy and remains so even as

the Scottish Greens recently joined the Scottish devolved Government for the first time. Indeed, it is the first time that a Green Party has joined any Government in the United Kingdom. We remain deeply concerned about these policies of the Scottish Greens and call for the Party to rescind them immediately in order to reassure the Jewish community of its good faith.



Lorna Slater, co-Leader of the Scottish Greens

LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Party is the only political party to have been found to be institutionally racist against Jewish people by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), following a statutory investigation in which we were the complainant. It is thus in a category of its own when it comes to assessing its record on racism against Jews over the past year.

The Parliamentary Labour Party and Shadow Cabinet comprise politicians who either actively supported an antisemitic leader — and Sir Keir Starmer himself is on record as having given his “100% backing” to Jeremy Corbyn — and those who did nothing as their principled and courageous colleagues quit the Party or, in the case of several Jewish MPs, were hounded out of it. Winning back the trust of the Jewish community — which, historically, has been very supportive of the Party that recently betrayed it — was always therefore going to take real and compelling action.



Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Labour Party

There have been examples of such action over the past year, including Mr Corbyn's ongoing suspension from the Parliamentary Labour Party (even as his suspension from the Labour Party was disgracefully short-lived and he is now eligible to attend the Party's annual conference); proclamations by Labour's General-Secretary to Constituency Labour Parties to avoid discussing antisemitism; the

proscription of the antisemitism-denial group Labour Against the Witchhunt and the disgraced former Labour MP Chris Williamson's so-called “Resist” faction, with all of their members threatened with automatic expulsion from the Party; the expulsion of Ken Loach; the ruling National Executive Committee's (NEC) resolution to introduce (subject to approval at Labour's annual conference) a semi-independent disciplinary process; and, at the local level, the good record of Labour-controlled local authorities of adopting the International Definition of Antisemitism.

Nevertheless, positive steps have been slow, incremental and at times undermined by contradictory maneuvers. For example, Mr Corbyn's suspension from the Labour Party was inexplicably lifted using precisely the disciplinary process that the EHRC had just ruled was unfit for purpose; numerous MPs and officeholders have not been sanctioned for sharing platforms with members suspended or expelled over antisemitism, despite Sir Keir's leadership election pledge to do so; and disciplinary actions in other high-profile cases have been reversed, the disciplinary process remains a mess and, when first published, Labour's proposed complaints handbook was a joke. Furthermore, the antisemitism-denial group and sham Jewish representative organisation, Jewish Voice for Labour, has not yet been proscribed. Neither, for that matter has the pro-Corbyn Momentum faction, whose co-Chair denied that a Jewish MP was hounded out of the Party, while Young Labour's controversies are ignored and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, which a past investigation by Campaign Against Antisemitism found was riddled with bigotry, has been positively welcomed by the Party.

Moreover, the goodwill and trust between Labour and the Jewish community that did build up in the months since Sir Keir won the leadership of the Party was wasted during the conflict between Hamas and Israel, when Labour MPs and councillors, though not alone, were too often involved in stoking communal division, ignoring displays of antisemitism at rallies and on some occasions even joining in with them.

We have also lodged a complaint against Mr Corbyn, holding him responsible for conduct that is prejudicial or grossly detrimental to the Labour Party, as the leader during the period of the EHRC's shameful findings. Given the serious detriment that this conduct has caused, we are seeking Mr Corbyn's immediate resuspension and, if our complaint is upheld, we will be requesting his expulsion. On the day of the publication of the EHRC's report, we also submitted a major complaint against Mr Corbyn and other sitting MPs, including Deputy Leader Angela Rayner. These complaints are yet to be acknowledged by the Party, and indeed there have been reports that our complaint against Ms Rayner has been dismissed without so much as an acknowledgement (contrary to the Party's new complaints handling policy), let alone an investigation.



Jeremy Corbyn

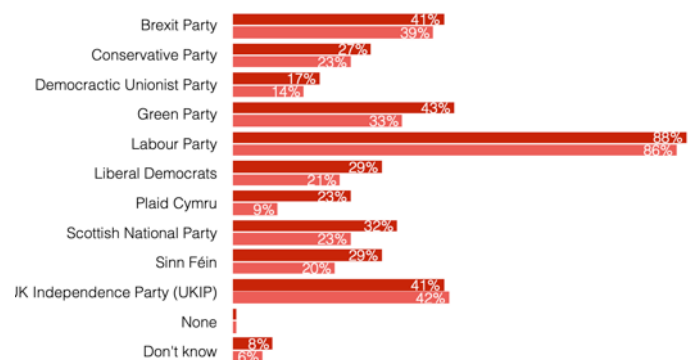
Not only have our complaints not been acknowledged almost one year since they

were submitted, but Sir Keir has also repeatedly refused to engage with us, despite our being the complainant in the EHRC's investigation into antisemitism in his Party. Indeed, Labour is the only major political party that has not been willing to work with us when approached.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Question: "Do you feel that any political parties are too tolerant of antisemitism among their MPs, MEPs, councillors, members and supporters? Please select all that apply."

• 2020 • 2019



Data from Antisemitism Barometer 2020

All of this has been noted by the Jewish community. Our latest Antisemitism Barometer, published at the start of the year (with polling conducted after Mr Corbyn's suspension and well before the conflict between Hamas and Israel), showed that British Jews feel that the Labour Party is more than twice as tolerant of antisemitism than any other political party. Remarkably, compared to the previous year's figures (polled while Mr Corbyn was still leader of the Party), Labour performed worse, with 88 percent of respondents considering that the Party was too tolerant of antisemitism under Sir Keir compared with 86 percent the year before under Mr Corbyn, perhaps due to disappointment caused by the evaporation of Sir Keir's bold promises. At times, this sentiment has spilled into the open.

The Party now faces its next test at its annual conference. The contours of the Party's internal struggle are clear, with Jewish Voice for Labour due to hold a fringe event; Labour Against the Witchhunt to hold parallel events; Welsh First

Minister Mark Drakeford scheduled to speak at a concurrent conference alongside Mr Corbyn and Mr Loach; pro-Corbyn members intending to push a motion to restore the whip to the former leader; and attendees due to be asked to approve mandatory changes to the Party's disciplinary committee that almost one third of the Party's ruling National Executive Committee nevertheless still thought fit to oppose.

see our complaints investigated and upheld so that the Jewish community gets justice.



Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford

Even if the leadership succeeds in redirecting the Party and recasting its rules, in the background is Labour's vast membership, over two thirds of which believe that the problem of antisemitism in the Party has been "exaggerated" or that there is not a serious problem (findings similar to those in a poll conducted shortly after the 2019 General Election), and the Parliamentary Labour Party, too much of which remains populated by Mr Corbyn's allies and acolytes, who hold similar views to him in relation to the Jewish community. The real challenge — to which our complaints speak — will be applying the new direction and rules to those in the Labour Party who supported or enabled the unlawful victimisation of Jewish people.

We continue to encourage the Labour Party in its positive steps and fulfilment of the Action Plan agreed with the EHRC, but we will also continue to pressure the Party on its failures and inconsistencies, and ultimately expect to

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Whether as a result of their reduced size, lack of media interest or a genuine willingness to tackle antisemitism when it arises — and there is evidence of the latter — the Liberal Democrats appear to have performed rather well over the past year in relation to antisemitism in Britain. The Party has improved markedly since the days of David Ward and Jenny Tonge (who mercifully retired from the House of Lords, where she sat as an independent, earlier this year).

The Party has generally moved quickly to investigate allegations when they have arisen, and even dropped a prospective London mayoral candidate after her past comments emerged — although as the Party's own leader admitted, questions remain about how she was permitted to stand in the first place.

antisemitism. This was particularly concerning given the surge in antisemitism in Britain during the conflict between Hamas — which is an antisemitic genocidal terrorist group — and Israel earlier this year. The Party did condemn that antisemitism at the time.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Liberal Democrats over the coming year, both to build upon their improvements in dealing with domestic antisemitism and to engage them on the issue of anti-Jewish racism abroad.



Sir Ed Davey, Leader of the Liberal Democrats

However, the Party still has something of a blind spot regarding antisemitism abroad. For example, in a debate earlier this year on antisemitism in Palestinian Authority textbooks, one of the Party's veteran MPs appeared to imply that the issue does not really matter. Meanwhile, at its recent annual conference, the Party adopted a motion about the Middle East that made explicit reference to the Palestinian Authority's and Hamas's persecution of the "LGBT+ community and women" but, disappointingly, made no mention of their

PLAID CYMRU

Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party, made a great deal of its internal review into antisemitism, to which we made submissions. The review came following the devastating report into antisemitism in the Labour Party by the EHRC. However, for all the Plaid Cymru report's worthy conclusions — including that the Party should update its definition of antisemitism to conform precisely to the International Definition of Antisemitism — the Party has taken no real steps at all to deal with its rather public antisemitism problem.

The report made recommendations to improve the Party's disciplinary process, but these have yet to be implemented. Moreover, the Party showed no willingness to prevent a candidate from standing for election despite her disgraceful record. The Party has also repeatedly failed to update us on the states of complaints that we have submitted. The report and its recommendations are only as useful as the Party's willingness to tackle the problem of anti-Jewish racism, and the Party's actions in the months since the review was announced and published give cause for concern.



Liz Saville Roberts MP, group leader of Plaid Cymru in the House of Commons

There is a conflict within the Party as to whether and how to tackle antisemitism. For example, former leader Leanne Wood appeared on Twitter to endorse the claim that antisemitism has been “exploited” to “smear” Jeremy Corbyn and to defend Rebecca Long-Bailey, who was sacked from Labour’s Shadow Cabinet after she promoted an article containing an antisemitic conspiracy theory. Meanwhile, another former leader of Plaid Cymru, Lord Wigley, asserted that “it’s absolutely clear that Plaid Cymru cannot tolerate antisemitism or any other form of racism.”

Late last year, our Antisemitism Barometer surveyed whether British Jews felt that any political parties were too tolerant of antisemitism. Plaid Cymru saw the largest increase compared to the previous year, with a rise from 9% to 23%. Although this year’s figure is still lower than that for other major parties, given Plaid Cymru’s limited geographical focus compared to national parties and its lesser media exposure, the Party should take no comfort from this statistic.

We continue to work with allies within Plaid Cymru to improve the Party’s position on racism against Jews.

SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY

Numerous SNP politicians have been revealed over the past year to have irresponsibly compared their political opponents to Nazis, which we have repeatedly called out, usually leading to apologies. Another MP has also made regrettable comments about antisemitism in Palestinian Authority textbooks. Also this year, an SNP MP previously suspended from the Party over allegations of antisemitism and subsequently readmitted was selected to sit on the Party's internal conduct committee (the MP has since left the Party for unrelated reasons).

The leader of the SNP and First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, recently sought to reassure the Jewish community that she “understood the community's anxieties” and is “committed to tackling” antisemitism. It was therefore disappointing that she struck a deal with the Scottish Greens, despite their policies on certain sensitive issues for the Jewish community. Ms Sturgeon now finds herself under pressure over the arrangement.

that Ms Sturgeon and the SNP — and indeed all parties — recognise that adoption of the Definition must be followed by its application in disciplinary cases, and that reassuring words must be accompanied by principled action against anti-Jewish racism.

We continue to monitor and cooperate with the SNP in tackling antisemitism in its ranks and within Scotland, where the SNP is the party of Government.



First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon (C), flanked by Scottish Greens co-Leaders, Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater

However, there are also bright spots. The first local authority in Scotland to have adopted the International Definition of Antisemitism is the body controlled by the SNP, namely the Scottish Government. It is important, however,



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JUSTICE, JUSTICE, YOU SHALL PURSUE

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