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Shami Chakrabarti and David Feldman,
Labour Party,
Southside, 105 Victoria Street,
London SW1E 6QT.

Dear Ms. Chakrabarti and Prof. Feldman,

RE: Labour Party inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism - consultation

I am pleased to see that the Labour Party is undertaking the above consultation, and would like to contribute to it. I am currently a Registered Supporter of the Labour Party who is considering becoming a full member. Unfortunately I am not confident that I would be welcome as a member given the current climate within the party, as I am an outspoken campaigner for the human rights of the Palestinian people. I have been dismayed over the last couple of months to learn of several fellow Palestine campaigners - all of whom ironically are Jewish, unlike myself - who have been refused supporter or member status of the Labour Party, or whose membership has been suspended.

My submission below, however, does not originate from direct experience within the Labour Party but from my experiences over the past few years in the trade union movement. In particular I wish to draw your attention to the roles which have been played by John Mann MP and Jeremy Newmark, who have featured prominently in the recent media frenzy around alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party. All my comments are made in a personal capacity and not on behalf of my union, the University and College Union (UCU) or any other organisation.

As an academic linguist, I take an interest in the origins and use of definitions. I have written papers and given conference presentations about definitions of antisemitism: see for example http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/journal/volumes/06/meijs_blackwell/.

I have been particularly dismayed by the promotion of the so-called EUMC "Working Definition of Antisemitism", which despite its name appears to have been written mainly by Kenneth Stern of the American Jewish Committee, an openly Zionist organisation which describes itself as "a leading international think tank and advocacy organization that uses education and diplomacy to build support for Israel". Stern has referred explicitly to "politically-based antisemitism, otherwise known in recent years as anti-Zionism, which treats Israel as the classic Jew" and has attempted to encode this concept in the EUMC definition.

The Labour Party should have nothing to do with any definition which concedes the idea of anti-Zionism being "politically-based antisemitism".

Perhaps I should make clear that I use the term "Zionist" to refer to individuals and organisations which support the political aim of Israel as a Jewish state, in which non-Jews are second-class citizens or not citizens at all. I myself used to espouse Zionism (of the Christian variety) but would now describe myself as an anti-Zionist. I know many non- or anti-Zionist Jews and believe it is essential to keep a clear distinction between Zionism, which is a political philosophy subject to criticism like any other; Judaism which is a religion; and Jewishness as an ethnic or cultural identity. Supporters of Israel frequently make deliberate attempts to blur these distinctions because they believe that all Jews should automatically endorse Zionism. I am greatly perturbed by the Royall Report's claim that use of the term "Zio" is antisemitic. Yes, I sometimes use it myself as a term of abuse: for Zionists, that is, many of whom are not Jewish. For me, using "Zio" as a term of abuse for a supporter of Israel is the same as using the term "Tory" for a member of the Conservative party or someone who acts like one. It is criticising someone, rather impolitely, for their political views.

In my experience, the EUMC "working definition", which was deliberately created to blur the distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, has been used by supporters of current Israeli policy in an attempt to suppress discussion about Palestinian human rights. Incidentally it should be noted that the "working definition" was never adopted and that the FRA, the successor organisation to the EUMC, has explicitly abandoned it.

In 2011 I was an elected member of the National Executive Committee of my union, the UCU. I brought a motion to the NEC about the EUMC definition: the NEC voted to adopt this motion and put it forward to the 2011 annual Congress, the policy-making body of the union. As the writer of the motion I was asked to propose it at Congress on behalf of the NEC. The text of the motion is as follows:

70 EUMC working definition of anti-semitism - National Executive Committee

Congress notes with concern that the so-called 'EUMC working definition of antisemitism', while not adopted by the EU or the UK government and having no official status, is being used by bodies such as the NUS and local student unions in relation to activities on campus. Congress believes that the EUMC definition confuses criticism of Israeli government policy and actions with genuine antisemitism, and is being used to silence debate about Israel and Palestine on campus.

Congress resolves:

- 1. that UCU will make no use of the EUMC definition (e.g. in educating members or dealing with internal complaints)*
- 2. that UCU will dissociate itself from the EUMC definition in any public discussion on the matter in which UCU is involved*

3. *that UCU will campaign for open debate on campus concerning Israel's past history and current policy, while continuing to combat all forms of racial or religious discrimination.*

A number of Jewish delegates to UCU Congress spoke in favour of the motion after I had proposed it. However, one member in particular, Ronnie Fraser of the Academic Friends of Israel, spoke against it. When the motion was overwhelmingly carried, Mr. Fraser first threatened legal action against UCU and then brought proceedings against the union at an Employment Tribunal for alleged harassment against him as a Jew. Mr. Fraser had long been upset by UCU Congresses over the years supporting motions which in one way or another criticised Israel and/or endorsed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against the occupation. For him, the motion condemning the EUMC "working definition" was the last straw.

Mr. Fraser's ET case was heard in 2012-2013 and consumed a considerable amount of my union's time, funds and resources in opposing it. All of Mr. Fraser's claims were resoundingly dismissed by the panel, and Judge Snelson stated in his Judgment:

"Lessons should be learned from this sorry saga. We greatly regret that the case was ever brought. At heart, it represents an impermissible attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means. It would be very unfortunate if an exercise of this sort were ever repeated."

My view is that the current witch-hunt taking place around and within the Labour Party is indeed repeating the exercise which Judge Snelson deplored.

I attach a copy of [the full Judgment](#) for your convenience. I believe that much of the content is relevant to your Inquiry, but I would like to draw your attention in particular to the panel's conclusions about the reliability of two specific witnesses, John Mann MP and Jeremy Newmark, who at that time was the CEO of the Jewish Leadership Council:

83 The Respondents [UCU] had come into existence by the date of publication of the Committee's findings. [the cross-party committee chaired by Dr Denis MacShane] They decided to respond to the report. Before doing so, they requested a meeting with the parliamentarians and as a result an appointment was fixed for 13 December 2006. Those present were Mr Mann, Dr MacShane, Ms Hunt and Mr Mackney, formerly General Secretary of NATFHE and by then joint General Secretary of the Respondents (a position which he continued to share with Ms Hunt until May 2007).

84 The meeting was not particularly a productive one. Ms Hunt and Mr Mackney referred to parts of the report which had described Jewish students feeling threatened on campus and explained that they wished for further information because that matter called for investigation. The parliamentarians did not provide any detail and did not genuinely respond to that inquiry at all. Mr Mann led for them and the more conciliatory tone of Dr MacShane gave way to a somewhat hostile display in which Mr Mann made no bones about his view that the union was operating in an anti-Semitic way and that those at its head must address the problem. He did not explain what the anti-Semitic behaviour was supposed to have consisted

of besides referring to the boycott debate and characterising any boycott of Israel or Israeli institutions as itself anti-Semitic.

131 There was a conflict of evidence concerning an event at the Respondents' Congress in 2008. It is not pleaded in the claim form but since it relates to the behaviour of witnesses who appeared before us, we think it right to record brief findings on it. A closed debate was to be held, for which permits were required. Ms Jane Ashworth, a member of Engage (and a witness before us), managed (as she put it) to "sneak in" without the necessary permit. Mr Jeremy Newmark, now and perhaps then Chief Executive of the Jewish Leadership Council (also a witness before us), attempted to do likewise but was stopped by stewards. He then tried to push his way in, but was not allowed to do so. Mr Waddup (already mentioned in relation to complaint (2)), spoke to Mr Newmark and told him that he would not be allowed in. We reject the allegation that Mr Waddup said, "You're not wanted here". We also reject as utterly unfounded the emotive allegation of Ms Ashworth that Mr Newmark was "Jew-baited". He was not baited at all. Neither Ms Ashworth nor Mr Newmark was a member of the Respondents.

148 We regret to say that we have rejected as untrue the evidence of Ms Ashworth and Mr Newmark concerning the incident at the 2008 Congress (see our findings under complaint (8) above). Evidence given to us about booing, jeering and harassing of Jewish speakers at Congress debates was also false, as truthful witnesses on the Claimant's side accepted. One painfully ill-judged example of playing to the gallery was Mr Newmark's preposterous claim, in answer to the suggestion in cross-examination that he had attempted to push his way into the 2008 meeting, that a 'pushy Jew' stereotype was being applied to him. The opinions of witnesses were not, of course, our concern and in most instances they were in any event unremarkable and certainly not unreasonable. One exception was a remark of Mr Newmark in the context of the academic boycott controversy in 2007 that the union was "no longer a fit arena for free speech", a comment which we found not only extraordinarily arrogant but also disturbing. We did not derive assistance from the two Members of Parliament who appeared before us. Both gave glib evidence, appearing supremely confident of the rightness of their positions. For Dr MacShane, it seemed that all answers lay in the MacPherson Report (the effect of which he appeared to misunderstand). Mr Mann could manage without even that assistance. He told us that the leaders of the Respondents were at fault for the way in which they conducted debates but did not enlighten us as to what they were doing wrong or what they should be doing differently. He did not claim ever to have witnessed any Congress or other UCU meeting. And when it came to anti-Semitism in the context of debate about the Middle East, he announced, "It's clear to me where the line is ..." but unfortunately eschewed the opportunity to locate it for us. Both parliamentarians clearly enjoyed making speeches. Neither seemed at ease with the idea of being required to answer a question not to his liking.

John Mann MP, who so publicly attacked Ken Livingstone as a "disgusting racist", should not be accorded any credibility by your Inquiry given that his evidence to the Fraser tribunal was so resoundingly discredited. Indeed I believe that it is he and not Mr. Livingstone who should have been suspended for bringing the party into disrepute.

I understand that one of the proposals being considered by the Inquiry is the recommendation of the Royall Inquiry into Oxford University Labour Club, that anti-racist training be provided for university Labour Clubs by the Jewish Labour Movement. Jeremy Newmark is now the national Chair of the JLM. Given the above Judgment in which his evidence on the subject of antisemitic conduct is dismissed by the judges as "untrue", I invite you to share my view that Mr. Newmark and any organisation which he heads would be most unsuitable to educate anyone on the topic of antisemitism.

I also find it incomprehensible that the JLM should be permitted to affiliate to the Labour Party or have any kind of structural relationship with it whatsoever. The JLM is the new name for Poalei Zion, the "Workers of Zion". It is affiliated to the World Zionist Organisation and the Israeli Labour Party. According to the UN, the World Zionist Organisation pumps millions into building in the occupied West Bank through its settlement division. The Labour Party should not have a relationship with any organisation which condones the illegal Israeli settlements, in contravention of international law and UK government policy.

The JLM has proposed a rule change to Labour's constitution, adopting the MacPherson principle whereby a racial incident is defined by the victim. It is noteworthy that the judges in the Fraser tribunal case refer to Mr. Fraser's witnesses misunderstanding the effect of the MacPherson report. It cannot be right for anyone to be able to define an incident as racist simply because they believe it to be so. Of course victims' perceptions have to be taken into account, especially in the context of how crimes are logged and monitored by the police force (which is what the MacPherson report was primarily concerned with), but there has to be some objective test within our justice system. The panel in the Fraser tribunal upheld this objectivity admirably. The Labour party should do likewise.

I believe that the Inquiry should state clearly in its conclusions that the Labour Party should reject any attempt to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. The Inquiry must acknowledge that such connotations are sometimes misguided but very often are downright mischievous: what the Fraser tribunal judges called "an impermissible attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means".

I do not see any need to amend the Code of Conduct adopted by Labour's NEC, as stated on the web page of your Inquiry. The current wording is commendably clear.

I look forward to a report which upholds the principles of natural justice, free speech, common sense and above all human rights. If it does so, and if the Labour Party accepts and implements such a report, I will be delighted to apply for party membership in full confidence that the party is indeed "a welcoming home to members of all communities".

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Susan Blackwell