

Personal submission to the inquiry.

## **Myself**

I joined the Labour Party on 12th Sept 2015, the day that Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader. Like so many others, I was and am hugely excited by his socialist message.

I am Jewish. As a child I encountered a certain amount of verbal anti-Semitic abuse and as an adult have experienced occasional low-level hostility, however anti-Semitism has never been a major problem for me. This does not surprise me in the least as the main targets of British racism during my life-time have been black and Asian people, the Irish, Gypsies and Travellers, and nowadays people from Eastern Europe. I see such racism regularly in my own street.

I have never experienced any anti-Semitism whatsoever within the Labour Party or within the other progressive campaigns of which I am a member. These include the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Red Card Israeli Racism and Jews For Boycotting Israeli Goods. It has been my experience that all progressively-minded people in Britain are fiercely opposed to racism in all its forms.

However, at present I do feel persecuted. That is because a number of Labour Party members have been suspended merely for voicing their opposition to war crimes perpetrated by Israel upon the Palestinians and/or for simple statements of fact concerning the history of Zionism. I am an anti-Zionist and I fear that I may be the next person to be picked off.

## **Rules and Procedures**

a) I think it is shameful that so many Party members of good standing have had their membership suspended for lengthy periods without even being informed of the details of the complaint against them e.g see David White's statement of 29/09/16 at <https://insidecroydon.com/2016/05/29/corbyn-supporter-white-to-campaign-for-natural-justice/>. It seems to me that the recent wave of suspensions bears the hallmark of a moral panic, triggered by sensationalist news headlines. That is no way to run a progressive political party. I believe that – unless there is a credible threat to the safety of other Party members - no one facing a complaint regarding their conduct should be suspended until a preliminary investigation has established that there are reasonable grounds to proceed further.

b) In some of the recent cases it appears that Party members unconnected with the Compliance Unit – and even members of the Press – have had knowledge of the suspension before the member concerned, e.g. see Cllr Miqdad al-Nuaimi's statement of 4/05/16 at <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/welsh-labour-councillor-who-compared-11282300>, or Momentum Waltham Forest's statement concerning David Watson at <http://www.newtekjournalismukworld.com/your-voice/momentum-responds-to-suspension-of-david-watson>. Such irregularities are alarming and give credence to claims that the current climate of fear has been used by some within the Party to conduct their own political or personal vendettas.

Under such circumstances, how can those concerned have faith that they will get a fair hearing? It seems to me that the Party's disciplinary procedures need a thorough overhaul to ensure that they reflect good practice and adherence to standards of natural justice.

The new Code of Conduct is an excellently worded statement of principle, but it will be worthless unless it is matched by decent procedures.

## **Differentiate between racism and the pursuit of justice**

It is not racist to condemn injustices, or work for their eradication, merely because they are perpetrated by members of an ethnic or religious minority. Recent claims that Zionism and/or Israel is an inherent part of Jewish identity are, in my opinion, very wide of the mark – but even if the

claims were valid, they could not acquit Israel from blame for its war crimes and could not be used to suppress lawful solidarity work such as that of the BDS movement.

Neither is it right to afford a special status to the terms “Zionism” and “Zionist” such that they are immune from criticism. Zionism is the ideology of an organised political movement whose history includes the mass dispossession of communities, the enforcement of a race bar on the employment of Palestinians and the brutal ethnic cleansing upon which Israel was founded. The claims of justice must always be paramount.

Whilst all members should be treated with courtesy, it would be strange indeed if Zionists and supporters of Israel were given a veto over statements of principle that differ from their own. My own view is that Zionism is itself inherently racist, a child of the backward romantic nationalism of the late 19th century whose first principle was that Jews should not live among other people. I do not expect everyone to agree with me, but neither should I be prohibited from stating my view openly.

## **References to Nazism**

Ever since the details of the Holocaust and prior Nazi mistreatment of Jews became widely known, there has been a temptation to draw parallels with forms of oppression elsewhere at other times. This is a measure of the impression that the crimes of Nazism have made on popular consciousness. In my view each such comparison should be judged on its own merits - like most Jews I am sensitive to discourse that risks trivializing the gravity of what was done, but I also commend vigilance in guarding against similar crimes in the future. It should be noted, however, that ANY comparison with Nazism implies condemnation of the latter's crimes and sympathy with the victims. By contrast, fascists and neo-Nazis commonly use Holocaust denial as a tool in their arsenal.

It therefore seems utterly perverse to me that some members stand accused of anti-Semitism for drawing upon parallels with Nazism at the time of the 2014 assault upon Gaza. Bear in mind the 327 Holocaust survivors who declared that Summer that “‘Never again' must mean NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE!” - see <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.612072> – were they being anti-Semitic too? They took no pleasure in the parallel.

## **MacPherson Principle**

It has been suggested that the Party should adopt the “MacPherson Principle” in dealing with complaints of racism, i.e. “a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”.

I think this suggestion should be treated with great caution. At the time of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry – during which the “institutional racism” of the Metropolitan Police was proven – it made a great deal of sense to insist that the police should investigate an incident as a racially-motivated one if the complainant perceived it to be such. Quite simply, the police could not be trusted to do so in the absence of such a directive. Does anyone seriously believe that the same can be said of today's Labour Party?

Remember also that such a directive would not absolve the Party's disciplinary machinery of the responsibility for making its own objective judgements on the validity of any charge of racism. In a police investigation officers must in the end make their own judgement as to whether a charge of racially aggravated abuse/assault can be supported, and the same applies to the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts should the matter proceed that far. Members of ethnic minorities do not have the power in law to make other people's minds up for them, and the Party should avoid adopting any rule or procedure that gives a contrary impression.

## **Definition of anti-Semitism**

One would think that a basic definition would be straightforward, e.g. any attack on Jews motivated by false and pejorative paradigms of Jewishness. Unfortunately the very notion of anti-Semitism is the subject of manipulation by the Zionist movement for political ends. Hence the founding of the Campaign Against Antisemitism in 2014, not to combat attacks on British Jews, their synagogues and cemeteries, but to deflect public condemnation of the war on Gaza by misrepresenting its detractors. To that end the CAA has published misleading statistics, insulted British Muslims, and touted the defunct EUMC “working definition” of anti-Semitism as if it has widespread acceptance. Campaign Against Palestinians would be a more suitable name.

Those who espouse the cause of Palestinian human rights quickly learn to expect regular accusations of anti-Semitism no matter what they do or say – it is one part unthinking chauvinism, one part cynical propagandizing. The Labour Party must give serious consideration to the fact that it is currently facing the same noxious cocktail.

“Rabban Shime'on ben Gamliel said, On three things the world stands; on Judgment, and on Truth, and on Peace.”

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Kenny Fryde