

Rejecting Britain's Anti-Semitic Left



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The deep hatred that taints significant parts of the British left has been painfully visible for many years, but very few stood up to fight this disease. The Labour Party's recent selection of Jeremy Corbyn, whose loathing for Israel is undisguised, appeared to mark a new low point. What is often termed "the new anti-Semitism", meaning the obsessive rejection of Zionism and self-determination for the Jewish People, seemed invincible, particularly in the United Kingdom.

But these attacks crossed an invisible red line, and dozens of officials, including Ken Livingstone, the former mayor of London, were suspended due to their anti-Semitic remarks. The BBC, whose broadcasts are seen as biased against Israel, featured debates in which Livingstone and the others were ridiculed and berated. Newspapers published commentaries that condemned the anti-Israel expressions and the failure of party officials to take action. This is indeed a new and historic development.

But as the anti-Semitism is gradually being exposed and rejected, step after painful step, it's clear that this toxic political disease isn't confined to the British Labour party. The deep prejudice is reflected in many other institutions, including on university campuses and among groups claiming to promote "liberal progressive values."

Some powerful charities and human rights groups have promoted campaigns singling out Israel for sustained attack, including boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS). These groups are allied with radical Palestinians and fringe Israeli anti-Zionists, promoting false allegations of war crimes, apartheid, genocide and other outrageous and immoral claims. Largely erasing Palestinian

terrorism, they repeatedly issue blanket condemnations of Israel, while, at least until recently, all but ignoring blatant atrocities and human rights violations in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Libya.

In a number of cases, the new political anti-Semitism on the left merges with classical theological hatred of Jews. Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), which is endorsed by many public figures and receives money from Britain's Department for International Development, is very active in demonizing Israel, in co-operation with the Council for Arab-British Understanding. Swee Ang Chai, MAP's founder, is also a promoter of the anti-Semitic rants of David Duke, leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

Christian Aid, which was created to provide humanitarian assistance, runs social media attack campaigns blaming Israel entirely for Palestinian suffering. (Palestinians are treated as children who are not responsible for their actions.)

War on Want, another very powerful group, uses similar rhetoric, and Jewish Human Rights Watch filed a complaint with the U.K. Charity Commission, citing the organization's campaign of "demonization of the State of Israel," which "has no bearings on the objects of the charity."

In the case of Amnesty International, in addition to frequent war crimes accusations, a number of its officials are active in promoting hatred. In November 2012, during an intense parliamentary debate on Gaza, Kristyan Benedict, Amnesty UK's campaign manager, tweeted a "joke" based on the image of three Jewish MPs as "warmongers." John Mann MP, chair of Britain's All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Anti-Semitism, observed that Benedict had "crossed the line between legitimate criticism and anti-Semitism" and called for an inquiry into the organization.

But Amnesty leaders dismissed Benedict's offensive words as merely "ill-advised" and "not racist or anti-Semitic." Two years later, he struck again, using the term JSIL ("Jewish State in the Levant") to compare Israel to the mass public executions and

beheadings of the Islamic State in Syria. Amnesty-UK also rejected urges to add anti-Semitism to its human rights agenda.

As these and other examples show, the mix of old and new anti-Semitism on the left goes far beyond the U.K. Labour Party. To truly rehabilitate themselves, these groups must close the gap between espousing progressive values and actually implementing them, starting with the immediate end to hatred of Israel and the Jewish People. This process has finally begun, but there is still a long way to go.