

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [The Rise of Antisemitism](#), HC 136

Tuesday 14 June 2016

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Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair); Victoria Atkins; James Berry; Mr David Burrowes; Nusrat Ghani; Mr Ranil Jayawardena; Tim Loughton; Stuart C. McDonald; Mr Chuka Umunna; Mr David Winnick.

Questions 1-224

Witnesses

[I](#): Jonathan Arkush, President, The Board of Deputies of British Jews.

[II](#): The Rt Hon Angus Robertson MP, Leader, SNP Westminster Group.

[III](#): Ken Livingstone.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Ken Livingstone](#)

Examination of witness

Witness: Jonathan Arkush.

Q1 Chair: I call the Committee to order and refer everyone present to the Register of Members' Financial Interests where the interests of members of this Committee are noted. I welcome Jonathan Arkush, the President of the Board of Deputies. Thank you for coming. You are our first major witness, if I can put it like that, in our inquiry into antisemitism. I would like to start with a general question. Do you think that antisemitism and antisemitic attacks are on the increase in Britain today?

Jonathan Arkush: On the basis of the figures compiled by the Metropolitan police, in 2015 there were about 500 antisemitic incidents. On the basis of figures compiled by the Community Security Trust, from whom I think you are going to hear—

Chair: We are.

Jonathan Arkush: They are the experts. They have produced detailed figures, using a methodology they have used for about 25 years, that there were something like 1,000 incidents, and that was the third or the second highest on record. The figures have not come down very much since 2014, when there was a spike at the time of the Gaza campaign. I think the figures have shown a slight and welcome fall since 2014, but they are still stubbornly high.

Q2 Chair: Why do you think they are on the increase? You sit as the head of one of the most respected bodies representing individuals of any religion. You must have conducted your own research on this, and obviously you have an enormous network in the community. Why do you think this is happening and where is the failure of the state in particular to deal with this problem?

Jonathan Arkush: Traditionally antisemitism has come from the far right, and we are not seeing very much far right activity at the moment. Traditionally there has always been prejudice against Jews coming from the far left as well, and I think that with the advent of a more leftward tilt in the leadership of the Labour party, some people feel that a space has opened up for them, or they feel emboldened to say things that previously they felt they could not say in polite society. I think that partly explains some of the statements made by people in the Labour party, although I do emphasise it is not by any means restricted to the Labour party.

Chair: I'll come to the Labour party in a second, if I may, because that is one of the areas we want to look at.

Jonathan Arkush: May I add something? A significant part of the incidents come from people who are or who appear to be from areas in Muslim communities. I want to emphasise that the overwhelming majority of British Muslims—and I spend quite a lot of time meeting them in



mosques and Islamic centres because it has been a priority of mine—are moderate and law abiding, and they are not prejudiced in the main; but there are some quarters who are very prejudiced, and I think they may get information or prejudice passed down through mosques, schools, literature or Muslim subscription TV channels of an extreme nature coming from abroad.

- Q3 **Chair:** We will cover more of that in a second, but first help me to define what antisemitism is. The definition of antisemitism adopted by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in 2015 includes the denial of the right of Jewish people to self-determination. Do you believe that it is antisemitic to question the morality of the establishment of the State of Israel? That is, in a sense, part of the defence of those who say they are not antisemitic: they say that they just don't like what the State of Israel is doing. Do you accept that definition, or do you have a better definition that could frame our inquiry?

Jonathan Arkush: At its simplest level, antisemitism is racial prejudice directed against Jewish people, but that of course needs to be expanded a certain amount because there are lots of different behaviours within it. What the European Union Monitoring Centre did—they called it a working definition as opposed to something cast in stone—was to group together various behaviours that they regarded as exhibiting antisemitism. The Fundamental Rights Agency is now the agency concerned, and more recently the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, on which this country is represented, has adopted the EUMC definition with a tiny change in wording that does not really change anything. So yes, we do regard the EUMC working definition as helpful, comprehensive and fit for purpose.

- Q4 **Chair:** So if somebody says, "I don't believe the State of Israel has a right to exist," they would be antisemitic?

Jonathan Arkush: If they said, "We don't believe in nationalism, as translated by the right to self-determination, of any people," I would not regard that as antisemitic, and I suppose it could be a coherent point of view. But based on the right of self-determination being a fundamental human right recognised in the charter of the United Nations, if they withhold the right of determination solely from Jewish people, but not from anyone else, I would question why they are singling out Jewish people for that exceptional treatment.

- Q5 **Chair:** That is very helpful. So if it is specifically about the State of Israel, they would be antisemitic and obviously anti-Zionist, too?

Jonathan Arkush: Yes. Zionism is the right of Jewish people to self-determination.

- Q6 **Chair:** So if they say, "I don't want anyone to have self-determination"—the people of Pakistan call themselves the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, for example, and there is the Republic of Iran—and it is for the whole world, that is fine, but if it is specifically about Israel, they would be antisemitic.



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Jonathan Arkush: We would say so, yes. We question anywhere where you single out Jews for one particular treatment that you do not accord to other peoples.

- Q7 **Chair:** Sure. Just one more on the foreign policy aspect. Are people free to criticise Benjamin Netanyahu and other Prime Ministers and former Prime Ministers of Israel for what Israel does or does not do in Gaza without fear of being called antisemitic or anti-Zionist?

Jonathan Arkush: Yes indeed. No one criticises the Government of Israel more than Israelis themselves. Just as you can criticise a policy of the Government of this country, or any country, we have never had any problem with criticism of one policy or another of the Government of the State of Israel, which is a very, very vibrant democracy. One only has to watch the way that political discussion is conducted in Israel, including in the Knesset, to realise that criticism is alive and well in the State of Israel.

Chair: Indeed—alive and well, and exciting.

Jonathan Arkush: Probably too exciting for some politicians.

- Q8 **Chair:** You took us to the Labour party, so let us concentrate on some of the things you have said about them, and indeed the far right and the far left—let's be fair in this. For example, in respect of Donald Trump's visit to the United Kingdom on 22 June, you stated that "Mr Trump's recent comments have been divisive and troubling." And that he "has not moved decisively enough to distance himself from extremist supporters." Is that what you describe as "the right"?

Jonathan Arkush: I am not sufficiently expert in United States politics. When I was talking about the right, I was talking about domestic politics in this country. It is certainly not unknown to find racism directed against Jews from parts of the political world on the right in this country. In relation to the United States, I guess that Donald Trump is on the right, and yes, we are very troubled by some of the things that he has said recently.

- Q9 **Chair:** And you think that they might be antisemitic, or are antisemitic?

Jonathan Arkush: No. We were referring to his getting embroiled in racial stereotyping about Mexicans, for example, most recently about the Mexican judge.

- Q10 **Chair:** Let us now move to the left and the comments made by Ken Livingstone, who is going to be one of our witnesses later on this afternoon. What troubles you about what he has said? He has made quite a strong defence of his views, and he has tabled a paper to this Committee today talking about all the work he did with the Jewish community while he was Mayor of London. What troubles you about him? Is it because he used the word "Hitler"? Is it because you think he is antisemitic himself? What is it that troubles you about what he said, for example? Obviously he is not the only person who may have made such comments, but let's use him since he is coming to give evidence to us today and we can put it back to him.



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Jonathan Arkush: In the old days people from the far right would try to smear Jews by accusing them of being communists. Now we are seeing some times when people on the far left try to smear Jews by saying that they behave like Nazis. What troubles me about Ken Livingstone is that his history was completely wrong and false. We will be sending your Committee, if you wish—I also have some copies here to leave—some pieces by respected historians who have shown that Lenni Brenner, whose book I think is what Mr Livingstone relies on, is portraying a totally false and distorted version of history. I have articles from *The Guardian* and the BBC, saying exactly the same thing, by other very well-known, respected and genuine academics. Lenni Brenner is not a genuine academic. He is a Marxist academic with a political axe to grind.

I don't know whether Mr Livingstone knew or did not know the falsity of his source textbook, but what I am absolutely sure about is that in saying that Zionists, which we regard as a codeword for Jewish people—at any rate, most Jews are Zionists and they believe in the right to self-determination—were like Nazis, he was being deliberately offensive and purposely provocative, and not for the first time in his career.

- Q11 **Chair:** No indeed, but let us stay on this particular point, because we cannot in this short space of 45 minutes deal with Mr Livingstone's entire career, I'm afraid. In respect of what he said on this issue, you are quite certain that those are antisemitic remarks.

Jonathan Arkush: I am absolutely certain that they were intended to offend. They were antisemitic because—whether or not he intended it, about which there may be speculation—in trying to say that Jews were like Nazis he said something that is plainly antisemitic. I find it astonishing that he could have made those remarks and that he still stands by them. I think that anyone who exhibits that sort of bigotry is clearly antisemitic. His views are utterly repellent to our community. If he was to say anything like that about any other people I think he would be labelled a political pariah, and that is what I think he is.

- Q12 **Chair:** But you went on further to say that the recent changes in the leadership of the Labour party meant that these voices can now come out, as if to suggest that they already exist in the political mainstream. When you are talking about the Labour party you are talking about the political mainstream, not a fringe party. They are the Opposition in the current Parliament. Do you believe that the political parties in total have a problem with antisemitism, or do you think that it is just the Labour party? We will be hearing from the leader of the Labour party, who has agreed to give evidence to us in two weeks' time, so we will put that to him. We are hearing from the leader of the Scottish National party after you, and we are awaiting the Prime Minister's reply. Do you think that there are these voices in all the political parties, or in your view is it exclusively the Labour party?

Jonathan Arkush: Lately it is mainly in the Labour party. Witness the fact that there have been some 50 suspensions pending disciplinary proceedings. The identity and party political affiliation of those who have



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been making statements that have reached the public eye recently is that they are members of the Labour party.

- Q13 **Chair:** I don't know whether you saw the comments of the president of the NUS, who described Birmingham University as "a Zionist outpost in higher education" and attacked "Zionist-led media outlets". That would be way off your scale in terms of describing it as antisemitic, I assume.

Jonathan Arkush: Yes, absolutely. The myth—the trope of Zionist or Jewish control of the media is a trope that goes back 1,000 years. We are well used to it; we recognise it when we see it. Anything that attributes to Jews some sort of sinister control or motive, or responsibility for the ills of the world—now the accusation is that Israel is responsible for all the troubles of the world. Things that people used to say about the Jewish people they now say about the world's only Jewish state.

- Q14 **Chair:** Finally, tell me where this all ends. Political leaders, present or former or whatever, making these kinds of statements—what do you fear about the statements being made by those who come from the political mainstream? Where does it end for the Jewish community in Britain?

Jonathan Arkush: It doesn't end with the Jewish community. History has shown us that people who start with the Jews—it never ends with the Jews. It is normally a sign of some greater ill in society that people feel they can pick on a numerically rather small people who have long been the objects of prejudice. I am actually confident that this and the fact that people in this country are rightly concerned about it, including this Committee—and I thank you for looking at it and for inviting me—will expose some unpleasantness in our society that all political leaders, if they are acting responsibly, as I am confident that they will, will do everything they can to put a stop to. So, part of it is that I would expect parties to have clear codes of conduct so that everyone knows where they stand, and that if someone breaks that code of conduct there will be sanctions within the party. I am confident that we will end up in a better place.

Chair: Mr Jayawardena—you have to leave.

- Q15 **Mr Jayawardena:** Thank you, for calling me early, Chair. Apologies; I have to leave to go to a Delegated Legislation Committee, but I shall be returning soon.

Mr Arkush, is anti-Zionism rapidly becoming the Trojan horse for antisemitism?

Jonathan Arkush: Yes, I think that is one way of putting it. Former Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks said that today you can be as antisemitic as you like and never use the word "Jew".

- Q16 **Mr Jayawardena:** Although I am sure that it does not reflect the position of the Member for Moray, who will be giving us his thoughts later, although there are so many conflicts across the world, within the Scottish Parliament the spotlight seems always to be on Israel. I searched through the records of the Scottish Parliament's most recent Session, from May 2011 to March 2016, and found that during that period there were 39



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motions lodged by MSPs about the State of Israel compared with 26 about Syria, 16 about Iraq, just six about Iran and only four about North Korea. The majority of the motions related to Israel were undoubtedly critical. While no one—you included—would argue that Israel should be immune from criticism, I think we have to ask this question: why this disproportionate focus on Israel? Is it because it is the world's only Jewish state?

Jonathan Arkush: That is exactly the question that we ask as well.

- Q17 **Mr Jayawardena:** Turning to Labour, many of us would argue that Labour's problem starts at the very top of the party. Many in Labour's leadership today have spent their entire political lives cosying up to antisemites and terrorist groups that express genocidal intent against the Jewish people, and they have worked closely with holocaust deniers, praised antisemitic extremists and described Hamas and Hezbollah as "friends". Do you believe that the inquiry that they are conducting will be enough to re-establish Labour's credibility on this issue? If not, what further action would you deem necessary to rebuild trust?

Jonathan Arkush: I want to say first of all that the Board of Deputies of British Jews is not a party political organisation and has no party political affiliations. We are solely interested in the wellbeing of the country's Jewish community.

We are concerned that leadership comes from the top. We are concerned that the leader of the Labour party has met Hamas and Hezbollah right here in the House of Commons, not in the guise of peacemaking but at a reception that was about celebrating the resistance, and he has called them "friends". Despite my many requests to him, both face to face when I had a very good meeting with him—he is a very engaging man—I wasn't able to get him to accept that those meetings were inappropriate, or to say that they would not be repeated. I really am waiting for him to say that.

- Q18 **Mr Jayawardena:** That is helpful. Last question, Chairman. Shami Chakrabarti, who has been tasked with chairing Labour's inquiry, has said that she will not seek evidence from Ken Livingstone, the former Labour London Mayor, whose suspension from the party triggered this—what can only be called "crisis"—within the Labour Party. What is your assessment of that?

Jonathan Arkush: We met Shami Chakrabarti this morning as it happened. The main Jewish communal bodies organised a round table for her, where she could ask whatever questions she wanted and have the discussion. I was present for most of that meeting, and we had a very good discussion.

I would like to place as much confidence as I possibly can in Shami Chakrabarti and her team. It is right that Labour should be given credit for setting up the inquiry, and the Jewish community hopes with anticipation that the inquiry will fulfil its remit and draw clear lines between what is acceptable political behaviour and what is not. Where the behaviour has



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crossed a line, we hope that there will be a clear, rigorous and fair system for responding to it.

- Q19 **Mr Jayawardena:** On the point I asked, is it acceptable—is it right—that the comments that triggered this crisis in the Labour Party will not be looked at by interviewing the person who said them?

Jonathan Arkush: That is probably a question for her. I am not aware that she wasn't going to ask him.

- Q20 **Mr Jayawardena:** What is your assessment though? Do you think it is right that the person who made these comments, who triggered this crisis in the Labour Party, will not be interviewed by the Labour Party's own inquiry?

Jonathan Arkush: His comments were so abhorrent and offensive, and he has repeatedly sought to justify them, that I can well understand that someone might conclude that having him along to have another opportunity to grandstand would not be conducive.

- Q21 **Mr Winnick:** Mr Arkush, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave evidence last week on the migration crisis. He was asked about feelings against Muslims and Jews. Are you aware that, when he referred to the Jewish people, he said—and I am quoting from the distinguished Archbishop of Canterbury—"We have to recognise that antisemitism has been the root and origin of most racist behaviour for the past 1,000 years in this country"? That is a view that, obviously, you fully endorse.

Jonathan Arkush: Well, Jews have been part of the fabric of this country since Roman times, so probably going back 2,000 years. As a matter of history, in 1290—

Mr Winnick: Yes, he missed that out.

Jonathan Arkush: In 1290, Jews were expelled, so between 1290 and approximately 1665 there weren't any Jews in this country, at least officially. Having said that, there was undoubtedly some Jewish prejudice: you can see it come out in some of the works of Shakespeare. Since the 1660s, Jews have been perhaps a readily identifiable minority in this country, but I would not say they were the only source of prejudice. At times, there has been prejudice no doubt against the Irish, Asian people and various others.

- Q22 **Mr Winnick:** No doubt, and it is deplorable in all instances. Of course, he not only inadvertently missed out 1290, but also what happened in Lincoln and York in 1190, which will be familiar to you. But he went on to say: "We have a shameful record, as regarding the church, until very recently in historical terms." Is that not a welcome recognition by the leading Church of England clergyman of the unfortunate involvement of the Church, and other Christian Churches, in antisemitism and general prejudice against Jews, accusing them of being responsible for the death of the saviour of the Christians?



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Jonathan Arkush: I think it is. Historically, sadly, one of the greatest sources of persecution of Jews has come from the Church. That is not the case today, let me hasten to say.

- Q23 **Mr Winnick:** When it comes to the difficulties of security, would it be right to say that there can hardly now be a synagogue, or Jewish school, that doesn't take the necessary precautions, and with every possible justification?

Jonathan Arkush: I'm afraid that is right. My synagogue, typically, if they have a brownie pack meeting—any activity at all in a Jewish place of worship or communal centre has to have security guards outside. With Jewish schools, there is another level of security altogether, and sadly some of them are beginning to look like fortresses. If we don't get a grip on this problem, we might end up—heaven forbid—like you see in France where every Jewish communal institution looks like a fortress guarded by the army carrying heavy weaponry, which is very, very intimidating.

- Q24 **Mr Winnick:** You have been, understandably, critical of certain remarks made by the Labour party. The Chair has referred to the inquiry which is taking place. Would you not agree that the Labour party, of which I have had the honour of being a member now for 60 years, has had a long tradition—almost from the beginning, indeed the word almost is not necessary—of full equality for minorities and certainly for Jews. Jews have had every opportunity within the Labour party to stand for public office, and that is certainly not true—would you not agree?—of the Conservative party until shall we say the last 25 or 30 years.

Jonathan Arkush: I do not have enough historical knowledge, and as I say the Board is not a party political organisation. But I would certainly agree with you that the Jewish community's ties with the Labour party run very deep indeed. Catching my eye is a picture of Harold Wilson, who was very friendly towards the Jewish community and the State of Israel, and that is why the Jewish community feels such anguish now. So many prominent members of the community have been long-standing members of the Labour party for decades, and they now find themselves torn into such a difficult position.

- Q25 **Mr Winnick:** I don't know whether 50 years is too long a period to look at, but following the 1966 election the *Jewish Chronicle* had a splash on 8 April 1966 in which it referred to the number of Jewish MPs, which antisemites were certainly going to exaggerate and did, and then said that as far as Tories were concerned there were just two. It has been said—perhaps I could have your comments—that huge senior Tories such as Lord Howard have a tremendous amount of difficulty in being selected for a safe Tory seat not because of his politics or his lack of ability, but simply because of his racial origin. Would you agree that, compared with the Conservative party, the Labour party over a long period of time has had a policy, as it has had towards blacks and Asians, of full equality and encouragement to join and be active in public life?

Jonathan Arkush: I don't know. All I can tell you is that I am 61 years old, and I grew up in Finchley. From as long ago as I can remember,



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certainly when I was a teenager, the Member of Parliament was Margaret Thatcher. She was a very deep friend of the community, and many local distinguished members of the Jewish community supported the party and had a home there. I don't know how far you need to go back. I do recall—I think it was Macmillan's remark, or someone made the remark—about there being more Estonians than Etonians in the party, so yes, there were prejudicial remarks then.

For as long as I can remember, and perhaps I am not as old as some, I think that there has been a very strong tradition of tolerance in the Conservative party. I think it is also fair to say that, until relatively recent decades, Jews were so overwhelmingly supportive of the Labour party that they wouldn't naturally have stood for office or for election in the Conservative party. I think that might be part of the explanation.

- Q26 **Mr Winnick:** The last question I want to ask is arising from what the Chair asked you about Israel. You accept entirely that criticism of Israel is perfectly compatible with non-racism, and that it is not connected automatically in any way with antisemitism. The criticism of Israel, which could be very strong indeed—some, indeed myself would say that it is often very much justified—is not antisemitic.

Jonathan Arkush: Absolutely. If people criticise a policy of the State of Israel it is not, per se, antisemitic. If someone only criticised the policies of the State of Israel and diverted their eyes from genuinely gross abuses of human rights in, say, Syria or North Korea or the Palestinian Authority for that matter, or anywhere, then I would question what their motivation was.

- Q27 **Mr Winnick:** If people justify antisemitism or try and justify prejudice against Jews, if not antisemitism, by referring to Israel, that is no more logical—am I not right?—than those who criticise aspects of Islam, not only the terror group but what goes on in Saudi Arabia and other countries including Iran. In doing so, they are not being anti-Muslim. That would be your position, wouldn't it? You can criticise Israel without being antisemitic, in the same way that you can criticise Muslim countries without being accused of being anti-Muslim.

Jonathan Arkush: Yes. Again, if you only criticise one, sometimes it is instructive. Instead of using the word "Jew", you use the word "black" and see if you would reach the same conclusion. If you are only focused on one place to the exclusion of all the others, I do wonder. But in principle, yes, I agree with you.

- Q28 **Victoria Atkins:** You have explained to us that you found Ken Livingstone's comments abhorrent—I think you used that word. Please speak now not as the President of the Board of Deputies, but as a husband, a father and a grandfather. How did those comments make you feel?

Jonathan Arkush: I was horrified when I heard them. In fact, when I heard about them I felt complete disbelief. Especially as the row was raging, with suspensions in the Labour party, people saying some really



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ridiculous things about Jews having big noses or that Jews were this or that. Most recently someone said that Jews were apparently the financiers of the slave trade and other historical calumny.

Simply as a British citizen who lives and works in this country, as I have done all my life, I could not believe that I was hearing someone in political life say that Hitler was a Zionist. To me it was not just the most absurd and ridiculous thing, but it was a hateful thing to say.

- Q29 **Victoria Atkins:** How do you feel when Hitler, or indeed the Holocaust, is prayed in aid to defend that person's view on Israel?

Jonathan Arkush: I feel very sad and very shocked and very insecure when it happens, because when it comes to criticism of Israel and sometimes Jewish people, all too often, Hitler and Nazis are prayed in aid, when you would never do that about anyone else. It seems to me a shocking correlation between the regime that murdered one third of the world's total Jewish population in six years and to correlate that with the victims of their industrial murder. I think it's truly shocking and truly unpleasant beyond words, but historically, utterly false.

- Q30 **Victoria Atkins:** When remarks are thrown away casually, for example, saying to a Jewish reporter words to the effect of "you are acting just like a concentration camp guard," how do you feel about that sort of casual, throwaway remark?

Jonathan Arkush: I was not then an office holder in the Board of Deputies. I was just a Jew in the pew, as it were. I remember that very clearly. I thought then and I still think now: does he have any idea of what happened in concentration camps? He was directing his remark at a Jewish reporter who he thought was asking him too many questions.

- Q31 **Victoria Atkins:** I will move now to the Labour review. Shami Chakrabarti, the former director of Liberty, is conducting the Labour party review into antisemitism. She joined the Labour party on the day she was commissioned to carry out this piece of work and I think she has said something along the lines of considering herself to be working for and in the best interests of the Labour party. Will you and the Board of Deputies have faith in that review?

Jonathan Arkush: We do have faith in it at the moment. We feel some conflicting emotions about her decision to join the party. She explained to us this morning that she felt that if she had not done that, people might have accused her of having different party political affiliations and therefore some axe to grind. That was her justification.

In the end, whether we have faith in her review will depend on its outcome. We have done our best to set out our side of the arguments and, as I say, we wait with anticipation and we place our confidence in the results. We hope that that confidence will not be misplaced.

- Q32 **Victoria Atkins:** Would it not be better to have someone who is independent of any political party and not a member of any political party whatsoever?



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Jonathan Arkush: I think that is a very strong argument, but this is a Labour party problem and it is for the Labour party to resolve. We hope they get it right. If we think that it is not being got right, of course we will be free to say so.

- Q33 **Tim Loughton:** Mr Arkush, perhaps I could first say that this inquiry is about the rise of antisemitism now, despite Mr Winnick's highly partial and selective misinterpretation of history, where of course the Conservative party were the first party to have a Jewish Prime Minister, well before the Labour party was ever being thought about. Because this is about all parties—it is not necessarily just about the Labour party—do the other mainstream parties at the moment have any particular problems with antisemitism that are of concern to you?

Jonathan Arkush: No. There was a Conservative councillor in Bradford recently who was alleged to have made a racist comment, who was promptly suspended. We certainly have seen some occasions in the past with the Liberal Democrats where they had some personalities—I think no longer elected Members—who said some quite dreadful things and we were very concerned about the culture within the Liberal Democrats. That was not long ago. Lately, the focus has been on statements made by people who are clearly members of Labour.

- Q34 **Tim Loughton:** So there is no particular, and certainly no strategic, antisemitism present in other parties that has manifested itself, or individual instances that have not been dealt with fairly swiftly.

Jonathan Arkush: I think that is right.

- Q35 **Tim Loughton:** So why do you think there is such a problem in the Labour party at the moment?

Jonathan Arkush: Well, I guess that the party has grown with an enormous influx of new members who took advantage of a scheme to join the party for a very insignificant amount of money and perhaps some people were tempted to join the party who may or may not be genuinely reflective of party policy. But I think it is mainly, as I said, the election of a leader who is associated with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War, with a very, very hostile position on Israel that is very well known and well publicised, and someone who has thought it appropriate to meet here, in the democratic mother of Parliaments, with terrorist organisations whose stated mission in life is to kill as many Christians and Jews as possible, which has clearly sent the wrong sort of message to some people.

- Q36 **Tim Loughton:** But do you think it goes beyond just a recent infiltration? Do you think there was a problem with systemic antisemitism among those people who were involved—members elected by the Labour party—before the current leadership?

Jonathan Arkush: Only in the far left, and that was not a dominant strain in the party.

- Q37 **Tim Loughton:** But it was there.



Jonathan Arkush: Yes.

- Q38 **Tim Loughton:** What do you think is the impact in society as a whole when people hear quotes from those in positions of office, of power or of affiliation to a mainstream political party that give a very, very prejudiced impression of members of the Jewish community and that may or may not, in its extreme, manifest itself in violence, graffiti or intimidation? Do you think that, deep down, there is a more insidious poison affecting our community when impressionable people hear such things coming out of the mouths of those sorts of people?

Jonathan Arkush: Let me give you the example of Luciana Berger and Louise Ellman. They are Labour Members of Parliament—in Louise Ellman's case, of long, distinguished standing—for Liverpool, and they have been trolled on social media. The trolling and abuse of Luciana Berger has been, as she describes, absolutely horrendous. I recently heard Louise Ellman recount what happened to her at a meeting of her constituency Labour party. She felt that the comments were so clearly hostile and personally directed against her that she felt it was antisemitic. They are Members of Parliament.

- Q39 **Tim Loughton:** Those are horrendous accounts, and there have been other accounts of Members of Parliament being attacked, including physically in some cases. In terms of the impression it gives to young people and impressionable people—that it gives some acceptability to the idea that it is almost okay to be a bit anti-Jewish because they saw somebody saying it in the press, on the television or in a report—do you share my concern that that is almost making what is clearly racism a little more respectable?

Jonathan Arkush: Any racist comment, whether directed against Jews or a member of any other minority, that is said in public and allowed to pass unchallenged must have a corrosive effect on society and will encourage others with similar prejudices to think that it is acceptable.

- Q40 **Nusrat Ghani:** Mr Arkush, you said two very important things in your evidence to the Chairman earlier. First, you said that prejudice and antisemitism are passed down in communities. You mentioned mosques as a particular example. You also mentioned that people are becoming emboldened to say things that they wouldn't say in polite society. I refer you to the submission from the Board of Deputies of British Jews: "The Board of Deputies has...been concerned about the reaction of some Labour members who...have reflected a culture of denial, disbelief, mockery and even censorship against Jews—including Jewish members of the Labour Party". If I take you back to the point about prejudice being passed down in communities, would you argue that if those community leaders are Labour representatives at local or national levels, and if they also hold the view you mentioned earlier, they also hold some responsibility for passing that prejudice down to those communities?

Jonathan Arkush: First, I hope that no one took me as saying that those sorts of prejudices are the norm in those communities. I was simply



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saying that in some parts of those communities prejudice can be passed down through family or religious affiliation.

Nusrat Ghani: Not at all. I completely understood it as some parts.

Jonathan Arkush: I do not think for one moment that in many of those cases the people exhibiting those prejudices had any party political affiliation at all.

Q41 **Nusrat Ghani:** You doubt that they did?

Jonathan Arkush: In many cases, I would have thought that they had no party political affiliation. During the Gaza campaign huge marches took place in British cities, including in London. People were holding up placards at those marches that included "Hitler was right." This was ostensibly a protest against Israeli actions in Gaza, and the hashtag #HitlerWasRight trended on social media. Later analysis showed that a lot of that trending came from south Asia, so there are some cultures where prejudice against Jews is all too common. You have probably seen some of the recent research reports which also point to a higher level of prejudice in some areas of society that needs addressing.

Q42 **Nusrat Ghani:** But community leaders and political representatives bear sole responsibility for the attitudes they have and for the impact that those attitudes have on communities, especially if there are elements of antisemitism.

Jonathan Arkush: Yes. All of us community leaders bear responsibility for leading our communities in a positive way. I should say that I have been to many mosques and Islamic centres, and I have only encountered generosity, humility, reasonableness and decency. But sometimes, a question gets asked by a member of the audience that really throws you. I had one recently in an Islamic centre in east London about the Jewish media. I said, "Can I just check where you're coming from? Are you talking about the *Jewish Chronicle* or are you talking about the wider media?" A bit to my shock, he said, "Of course I'm talking about the wider media, because everyone knows it's controlled by the Jews." That is prejudice.

Q43 **Nusrat Ghani:** When you have candidates or councillors who say things such as, "What do we know about Jews? They've got big noses and support Spurs," and, "Who is the Zionist god? I am starting to think it might be Hitler"—if a Labour candidate says that, that is an issue for the role they have within that community.

Jonathan Arkush: The only thing she got right was that some Jews, like me, support Spurs.

Q44 **Nusrat Ghani:** When you have a Blackburn Labour councillor saying, "Apartheid at its best. Zionist Jews are a disgrace to humanity," it is an issue, isn't it?

Jonathan Arkush: It is a very serious issue.



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- Q45 **Nusrat Ghani:** You also said that antisemitics may be emboldened to say things that they did not say before. There seems to be some confusion in the evidence that Mr Ken Livingstone has submitted, which assumes that antisemitism has only come about since the election of Mr Corbyn as leader of the party. Your evidence suggests that it was there before, and those people have just become emboldened to come out now.

Jonathan Arkush: Quite a lot of the social media postings that have resulted in suspensions predate Jeremy Corbyn's election.

- Q46 **Nusrat Ghani:** So that is an accurate assumption. I have two very quick questions. You talked about Shami Chakrabarti's inquiry and report. You said you have confidence in that report, but if the leader of the Labour party and Mr Ken Livingstone believe that there is no antisemitism, how is that report going to be balanced?

Jonathan Arkush: We have stated on the record that we are concerned that an impression has been given by the leader of the Labour party of a certain reluctance to accept these issues. Apparently—I have not seen it—the fly-on-the-wall documentary was quite dramatically illustrative of that in his put-down of a long-standing Labour supporter who had written an article in *The Guardian*. We are concerned. I give credit to him and the Labour party for setting up the inquiry, but the impression we have got is that every step taken has had to be, as it were, wrung out of him by public pressure. We are worried about that. Also, as I said, I have so many times now said to him, "Please say, 'Be part of the solution.' With your anti-racist credentials, which you are very keen to tell people about and which we accept, please now say that meeting with Hamas and Hezbollah is an exercise that won't be repeated"—

Chair: Sorry to interrupt, but you have said this before. We need to move on from Mr Corbyn.

- Q47 **Nusrat Ghani:** Your most crushing piece of evidence is that some of the comments by Mr Ken Livingstone have made you feel very insecure. Can you think of any reason why a person of Jewish heritage, or even someone who is Muslim or Christian or of any political background, might want to join the Labour party today, considering it seems to be harbouring antisemitic attitudes?

Jonathan Arkush: I don't know if that is a question for me. I suppose people have to make up their mind whether they align with the policies of the political party. I can see that some people may decide to join the Labour party in order to fight racism.

- Q48 **Mr Umunna:** Mr Arkush, thank you very much for giving us evidence today. I have been a member of and activist for the Labour party for almost 20 years, and I want to assure you that the picture that has been painted of the Labour party and its members, in the evidence you have just heard, does not reflect what my party is about or the beliefs of the members who do the work, turn up to the meetings and campaign for what we believe in. There is one question I want to ask you in relation to our new membership. The membership of our party has grown. Over



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1,000 of our members were polled earlier this month on this issue and were asked what they made of recent events. In answer, 49% of those polled—of course, this encompasses all the members, not just the members who in the main are often the ones who do the hard work in our party, campaigning for our values—said that they did not believe that the Labour party had a problem of antisemitism. They believed that what we are talking about today had been cooked up by the media and cooked up by those who are hostile, for want of a better word, to the current leader of the Labour party. What would you say to them?

Jonathan Arkush: I would say that they were a part of a culture of denial. Look, if 50 people have been suspended from the Labour party and there have been a number of very well-publicised statements that they had made, then get real. What is happening here that someone feels that they can say these very racist things? Look again at what Mr Livingstone said, and get real. Look at what he said. I can well imagine that for the overwhelming majority of people out there in the country, members of any party, this is not an issue that detains them for very long. They are more concerned with their lives out in the countryside or wherever it happens to be. They are very far from this sort of discussion, but to the Jewish community it is very real indeed. The amount of media comment from across—including media that traditionally supports the Labour party, and very senior Labour figures—

Chair: Yes, thank you, Mr Arkush, you have made that clear.

Q49 **James Berry:** I have two questions, if I may. To build on what Mr Umunna said, there is a hard-left narrative out there at the moment that Labour's current issues are in fact being hijacked by pro-Israel or Zionist lobbies to rebrand any criticism of Israel as antisemitism. What do you say about that?

Jonathan Arkush: It is just not true. We simply have never said and never would say that any criticism of Israel is antisemitic. I noted that Piers Corbyn and people said that sort of thing, and we asked Jeremy Corbyn to say that that wasn't the case. It is just a way of deflecting. I also want to say, in answer to something that Chuka Umunna said, that I am really glad to hear that the party doesn't stand for these things. However, just this morning at the communal roundtable with Shami Chakrabarti, two frankly rather harrowing tales were told of different constituency Labour parties in the Camden area of north-west London where in the last two or three weeks votes about this matter had been put off. There was an air in the room such that even hardened Jewish communal leaders—and there are such people who are members of Labour—felt deeply intimidated and wanted to leave.

Chair: Mr Arkush, we will be hearing from the leader of the Labour party eventually, so we will put this to him. Final question, because we have other witnesses.

Q50 **James Berry:** Many people in Stop the War Coalition, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Unite Against Fascism and other organisations of that kind would consider themselves very strongly to be anti-racists. What advice



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would you give members of those organisations if they truly want to wear the mantle of being someone who is an anti-racist?

Jonathan Arkush: Look at themselves hard in the mirror, perhaps with some assistance and training, and see whether they are treating Israel as the Jewish state and Jews as Jews in the same way that they would treat any other country or any other minority.

Chair: Thank you. Finally, Stuart McDonald.

Q51 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Mr Arkush, your evidence has been extremely helpful indeed. I want to challenge the idea that you appear to go along with in response to Mr Jayawardena's question, that a focus on a particular country can be equated with applying double standards. If, for example, I were to count up the number of MPs who have tabled motions and questions on the EU, that is not indicative of xenophobia. If one of my colleagues has tabled lots of motions on Saudi Arabia, that is not some sort of discrimination against the people of Saudi Arabia, it is just indicative of an interest in that particular subject matter. Is that fair?

Jonathan Arkush: I think you absolutely can have a particular interest in the middle east as a region, but if you just have a focus on Israel that becomes obsessive and you ignore what is going on in the neighbouring countries, which on any basis are the most egregious human rights abusers you can imagine, compared to what is in the end a law-based society and a democracy in Israel, then I do wonder.

Q52 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Sure, but people who table motions—for example, on actions by the State of Israel—will often be doing that because they are trying to defend human rights. One reason why Israel might attract more attention than other countries is that it is a liberal democratic state, and it is one that we have strong ties and indeed influence with, so a motion here or in any of the devolved legislatures may have more effect than, for example, one on South Korea. Is that not fair?

Jonathan Arkush: Human rights are human rights. You may be justifiably concerned with human rights but I don't think it is very credible if you are only concerned about human rights in one country and you seem to avert your eyes or take no action at all on far greater breaches of human rights in a neighbouring country.

Q53 **Stuart C. McDonald:** I have a final question for your, Mr Arkush. You talked about the statistics on hate crime. How accurate do you think they are? Is there a risk of under-reporting and do they properly capture the current feeling of insecurity within the community?

Jonathan Arkush: Hate crimes are traditionally under-reported because people do not want to report them. I have faith in the police figures, because they are based on crime reports. I have faith in the Community Security Trust figures because it is a highly experienced, professional organisation that collects the data on a consistent, methodological basis. I have no reason to think that those figures are inaccurate.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming, Mr Arkush. We are most grateful.



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If there is anything you wish to say to the Committee that you have not been able to say during this evidence session, or anything that comes out during the later sessions, please do not hesitate to write to us. We have evidence from other organisations, especially on the security angle. It is our intention to meet with the Labour Friends of Israel, the Conservative Friends of Israel and the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel—possibly in one room, if we are brave enough to do that—to hear from them. We cannot take evidence from every single group but we will now be hearing evidence from Mr Robertson, the leader of the SNP. You are welcome to stay for that. We will also be hearing evidence from Mr Corbyn, and we have asked the Prime Minister to represent his party.

Jonathan Arkush: I thank the Committee for its interest in the subject.

Chair: Thank you. Could I call the leader of the Scottish nationalist party?

Examination of witness

Witness: Rt Hon. Angus Robertson MP.

Q54 **Chair:** Mr Robertson, thank you very much for coming here today. Obviously, we are fellow parliamentary colleagues so we all declare our interest: we see you every day in various parts of the Palace of Westminster.

The evidence so far has focused a great deal on the Labour party but, of course, there has also been evidence about Scotland. You have been very clear about the fight against antisemitism and racism throughout your career, and we know your back story and life history, with parents of different nationalities who came to the United Kingdom as refugees. That is your definition of antisemitism?

Angus Robertson: Given the previous evidence session, I do not think it is necessary to revisit that. I share the view that the definition that has been outlined by the European Union's monitoring body is an appropriate one. I see no reason to take issue with that as a common starting point for us all.

Q55 **Chair:** You in Scotland have your own difficulties, as has the Labour party has in England, or some people would claim you have the same difficulties. One of your MSPs, Sandra White, was responsible for making some unfortunate remarks. Presumably, you will tell us that that was an exception, but what actually happened?

Angus Robertson: First, let us not be under any illusions. We all have problems with antisemitism, sadly. There is antisemitism everywhere. There have been examples and they can be shown in all political parties, to a degree. We all have responsibility as political leaders and democratic politicians to be absolutely unequivocal in our condemnation of antisemitism and, for that matter, Islamophobia or homophobia, and any kind of extremist language or action.

The case that you bring up relates to a tweet by an SNP Member of the Scottish Parliament. When it became apparent what it was—an image was



tweeted—she deleted it, apologised for it and described it as an “error”. She wrote to the Scottish Council of Jewish organisations to apologise unreservedly for it. She said that she retweeted this image in error and found the views it represents offensive.

I can go on about the correspondence that then took place between the First Minister and the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, but we should be under absolutely no illusions about this: it was totally unacceptable. So there was no prevarication about what it was. It was unacceptable and an apology was issued. I think a large part of your investigation is going to revolve around what language is acceptable and not acceptable and the use of certain terms. In this case, the image that was tweeted was totally unacceptable, it was deleted and that was that.

Understanding that this was likely to be a question in the evidence session, I thought it would be opportune to speak to my colleagues in the SNP’s headquarters. You have also been dealing with examples that have been numbered in other political parties, so I wanted to understand what was the experience from within the SNP, because in all democratic political parties we have disciplinary procedures, we have committees that deal with these kinds of things and we have people who monitor and ensure that what we do is in accordance with our policy and reflects our values. Yesterday, I spoke to the party’s chief clerk, who is responsible for dealing with these matters, and he is not aware of a single issue, past or present, relating to antisemitism that has been the subject of a complaint to the SNP formally from within—from SNP Jewish members—or from members of the public who are concerned about something.

Now, having said that, I do not want to give the Committee the impression that because of that and because there has been a single example—perhaps there are other examples of tweets that people might take exception to, but it is definitely an exception and not the rule—that that in any way leads us to conclude that there is not a problem, that we should not be vigilant and that we should not by our actions and deeds, by what we say and how we say it, make absolutely clear what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

- Q56 **Chair:** Yes. Let us look at some other examples. The Community Security Trust has said that the Jewish population in Scotland is about 10,000 and that the number of antisemitic attacks was 31, up from 14 the previous year. They said they attribute this almost exclusively to the coverage of Gaza. We heard in the evidence given by the President of the Board of Deputies about the conflation between being antisemitic and the discussions going on and the criticisms of Israel in Gaza, and he specifically said that the number of motions—if only people looked at our motions in the British Parliament as carefully—criticising Israel in the Scottish Parliament was so great that he thought that was very unfair and that you all should be concentrating on other issues. You are the leader of the party. I do not expect you to approve every motion that is put down, but do you get his point that this constant chipping away and criticism of Israel may well be a problem?



Angus Robertson: There are a number of issues packed into your question. Firstly, I am dealing with numbers. The Jewish community in Scotland officially numbers between 5,000 and 6,000. It is believed that it is under-reported in the census, so it may be 10,000 or a little bit more than that but in a population of 5 million it is a very small but very important part of our national life.

We heard in the previous evidence session that it is believed that in the last year there were between 500 and 1,000 examples of Jewish hate crime. To update you, the latest statistics in Scotland were published four days ago and they show that hate crime comprised 18 incidents—that is 3% of religious hate crimes in Scotland. I suspect that there are a range of other incidents that are not captured by the hate crime statistics—I would say “lower level” narrow-mindedness and hatefulness—and I do not doubt that that is the case. The context of 18 incidents out of between 500 and 1,000 in the United Kingdom as a whole shows that relatively speaking it is a small issue, but for all of the 18 people involved in those hate crimes and those perhaps not captured by the statistics it is problematic.

We will come to how the Scottish Government, education and prosecuting authorities deal with these issues. But on what can contribute—to come to the second part of your question, Mr Chairman, relating to parliamentary motions—I will first clarify for the benefit of Westminster colleagues that we are talking about the equivalent of early-day motions. We are not talking about the policy of the Scottish Government, or the Government business of First Minister Sturgeon and her Ministers; we are talking about the issues that people care passionately about.

As we know, we all have colleagues who are extremely passionate about some subjects. Within the SNP, as is the case in other political parties too, the treatment of the Palestinians and their right to self-determination is absolutely a hot button issue. I do not resile from that, and my party does not resile from it. We are a party that, in step with all other mainstream political parties in the UK Parliament, favours a two-state solution that is recognised in the self-determination of Israel and the self-determination of Palestine.

Q57 **Chair:** But do you think that is the trap that Mr Livingstone fell into? He was actually talking about Gaza and the Middle East, and therefore he fell into the trap in which people like him and others are accused of being antisemitic and anti-Zionist, whereas they actually want to talk about what is happening in Gaza. Do you think that that is a valid argument?

Angus Robertson: I think there are all kinds of ways of bringing up issues such as Gaza and the policy of the Israeli Government, the military incursions that have occurred and the way that Palestinians or Israeli Arabs are treated. We know that there are a panoply of issues that people feel passionately about and have big concerns about, but I think all of us in elected office have a responsibility to be very careful about the words that we use. We know from all the academic research that words like “Zionist” or “Zionism” are used by some—a minority—as a code for Jews.



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We should be very, very careful about how that kind of language is used. Am I right in saying that bringing up the Nazis is known as Godwin's law—you're beginning to lose the argument, so you bring up the Nazis? I'm sorry, but while there are areas where people can be jokey about all kinds of things, as you have pointed out, Chairman—forgive me. As someone who is half-German, given the history of my family and the way they were treated in 1933, the idea that you can bring up what happened in Germany and in the countries it occupied between 1933 and 1945 in any way to justify anything in relation to Zionism—I cannot understand how any mainstream politician or any mainstream political party could think that that is acceptable.

Q58 **Chair:** So you condemn the comments made by Ken Livingstone?

Angus Robertson: Yes.

Q59 **Chair:** And you think that he was wrong to make them, and you share the concerns of the President of the Board of Deputies about them?

Angus Robertson: Yes, unequivocally.

Q60 **Chair:** And you think there is no excuse for doing so in the context of any discussion about—

Angus Robertson: No, there is no excuse for it.

Q61 **Chair:** And he should have apologised and—well, he couldn't resign, because he is not elected to anything in particular. We will hear from him shortly.

Angus Robertson: Indeed.

Q62 **Chair:** If he were a politician in your party, what would you have done to him?

Angus Robertson: I would have sought for him to be dismissed from the party for acting in a way that the SNP rule book calls "conduct inimical". It is against the values, policies and approach of the SNP.

Q63 **Chair:** You don't think that Sandra White did the same thing?

Angus Robertson: No. Reflecting on what she posted, she acknowledged that it was a total mistake. As far as I am aware, Mr Livingstone has not apologised or sought to explain that what he said was a mistake. It was said over a protracted period, as I remember, having been able to listen to it in the media and watch it on television.

Q64 **Chair:** Two final points. One concerns comments made by Lord Michael Grade, the former chairman of the BBC. He said a few weeks ago that antisemitism was rampant in golf; in particular, he felt he was barred from Muirfield because he is Jewish. Have you come across any statements similar to that? Were you surprised to hear about what Lord Grade said? Obviously, golf is a pretty important tourism—

Angus Robertson: It is. This is the same golf club that doesn't find it acceptable for women to play there.



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Chair: Exactly.

Angus Robertson: Looking at it in fairness, it should be pointed out that this is in relation to what were believed to be the circumstances in the 1980s—that is point one. Point two, the golf club denies that it was as Lord Grade reported it. Notwithstanding that, I would be totally horrified. It goes back to blacks not being able to sit on the bus or in Parliament and suchlike. It is just something that, I hope we would all agree, is from a dim and distant past that none of us in mainstream politics would accept.

Q65 **Chair:** And none of you in mainstream politics, particularly party leaders, would want to use language that could be misconstrued in any way. We have to be very careful with the language used.

Angus Robertson: Yes, about everything, but in particular we have a responsibility to lead in this area by choosing the words that are appropriate and putting things in context. That is why, for example, last year, when the SNP became the third political party in the British Parliament, I asked my office to review my appointments. Since last year, the faith group I have met most is the Jewish community, whether that is the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, the Jewish Leadership Council or Jewish Care—the list goes on, and the meetings will continue to go on, because it really matters. I would be careful in correcting you, Mr Chairman, but the name of my party is the Scottish National party, rather than the Scottish nationalist party.

Chair: It is, indeed.

Angus Robertson: That is an important point, because we aspire to be the political party that is there for everybody in Scotland, and that includes our Jewish community.

Q66 **Chair:** I was automatically corrected by Mr McDonald.

Donald Trump is regarded by some people as extreme and having extremist views. He is the presumptive Republican candidate, he operates a number of golf courses in Scotland, and on 22 June he is coming to open a new hotel. Given what he has said, is he a welcome visitor to Scotland?

Angus Robertson: We need to differentiate two things. How do I view anybody's views, but especially somebody who is aspiring to high office in such an important country? To say what he said about Muslims falls in the category of being totally unacceptable. What was then tweeted following the recent tragedy in Orlando is totally unacceptable. It falls into the category we were discussing before: when it comes to political leadership, you have to choose your words wisely and carefully. I would hope that that doesn't give the impression that I think it is okay to hold those views in private. It would worry me if Mr Trump held those views in private, but he seems to hold them in public. Is he entitled to visit places where he has business interests? Of course he is. But the fact that not a single one of Scotland's mainstream political leaders will be there tells its own tale.

Q67 **Chair:** So he is not welcome, but he's coming.



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Angus Robertson: Mr Trump is perfectly entitled to visit whichever business he has an interest in, but I have no interest in a political dialogue ahead of an American presidential election with somebody who thinks it is okay to bar a religious community from visiting those shores. Those kind of views were prevalent in some parts of Europe in the previous century; they were unacceptable then and they are unacceptable now.

- Q68 **Mr Winnick:** As far as golf clubs are concerned, I think it was all summed up by Groucho Marx, who said he wouldn't wish to belong to any club that would have him as a member. Whether that is appropriate for Lord Grade, I don't know.

If I may so say, Mr Robinson, you have as a party a good and distinguished record of combating antisemitism and racism—as much as my own party, which has always been anti-racist from the beginning, despite the more recent difficulties over the past year or so. It wasn't always the case with your party, was it? Going back many, many years, I admit, the chair of the SNP was Andrew Dewar Gibb, was he not?

Angus Robertson: Indeed, yes.

- Q69 **Mr Winnick:** He had very strong views. As I understand it, he expressed admiration for Hitler and Mussolini. He praised Hitler's Jewish policy and condemned communism as, in his words, "too largely Jewish in origin". That is a past that the SNP obviously distance themselves from in every possible way and condemn.

Angus Robertson: Yes, utterly. I should just point out, though, that in fairness we could all look into the history books of political representatives from the Labour party, the Conservative party and others in the 1930s and find that people had all kinds of views that now, and with the benefit of hindsight, we utterly abhor. Don't get me wrong, you are absolutely right to bring up the fact that in different days there were voices in all political parties with views that we would have nothing in common with now, but if you have looked through the annals of the history of the SNP—no doubt you were going to bring this up next, Mr Winnick—you may have looked back at the past president of the SNP, Winne Ewing and read what she and her family did in Glasgow at the time of the Kindertransport, or you may be planning to bring up the role of Willie MacRae, a past vice-president of the SNP, a good friend of Israel, who co-authored the maritime law of the State of Israel. We need to look at things in the round.

Where there are cases historically and we need to be absolutely clear that those views were and are unacceptable, I agree with you, but in fairness there is no point in having a party political fight between mainstream political parties. I hope we all agree that we are on the same page now. That that was not always the case in all of our parties. We need to be vigilant and ensure that none of that ever happens again.

- Q70 **Mr Winnick:** I prefaced my remarks very clearly, I hope, Mr Robertson, by saying that nothing could be more different than the policy pursued by your party for many years. However, I must say, without taking a holier-than-thou attitude, I would be horrified if the chair of the Labour party at



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any stage of the 1930s expressed such views. I would be of the opinion that they would have been the very opposite in the various debates on Nazi Germany.

Angus Robertson: We remember where Sir Oswald Mosley came from politically, don't we?

Mr Winnick: Yes and we know where he went. He denounced the Labour party at every opportunity.

Chair: Order. Can we move on with our questions?

Q71 **Mr Winnick:** The only other question I want to put to you is the one the Chair asked you about to a large extent, though not entirely, and that is the position of Israel. Some—not all—of the people who are accused of being antisemites say, "Far from being antisemites, we simply believe that what Israel is doing is without justification, that the Palestinians have been deprived of their land, suffer humiliation day in, day out, and their case is not being properly put." How do you distinguish that viewpoint from antisemitism?

Angus Robertson: First off, it is a position that in many regards I would share. I am a strong critic of the Government of Israel. I am very concerned, as are many members of your party, about the treatment of the Palestinians.

Mr Winnick: Including myself.

Angus Robertson: Including yourself. I would wish there to be a two-state solution, although I think we all acknowledge that, given the history and circumstances, it is a very difficult change to bring about. Nevertheless, that is what we should be pursuing.

On the issue of where that morphs into antisemitism, it is when those, in pursuing their support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, start using language and imagery that we know from history has been used before to cast that back to all Jews in Israel. So one stops talking about the Government of Israel; one then starts talking about Israel; one then starts talking about Zionists; then some people start talking about Jews.

It is correct that at some point along that line it morphs into antisemitism, to my mind. One starts using the tropes—and they have been outlined by the Board of Deputies, so I don't need to go into them again—and the repeated accusations from the 20th and 19th centuries about Jewish ownership of the press or the financial system and so on, to influence public opinion. That is definitely antisemitism.

Q72 **Mr Jayawardena:** What steps has the SNP taken and what further steps will it take to promote inter-faith relations and tackle the antisemitism, however small or great it may be, within your party and in Scotland?

Angus Robertson: The first thing is that we have a job to do. I am here as the Westminster leader of the SNP, so my responsibility is to ensure



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that we are doing everything that we can here. My colleagues and I have been great supporters of the likes of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, as no doubt are all members of the Committee, and we show solidarity where we can in relation to the Jewish community and in our opposition to antisemitism.

Of particular relevance for the SNP is, of course, that we are in government in Scotland. There are many ways in which we can influence Government policy to try to deal with the root causes of antisemitism, where necessary. There are two ends of that. First, in educational terms, we must make sure we are doing everything we can to learn the lessons of history, so that people do not repeat it, or indeed use the language of the past. You raised specifically the issue of inter-faith relations. The Scottish Government invested over £3 million in 2015-16 in organisations tackling racism and religious intolerance. The grant includes nearly £50,000 to the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities. There are other ways in which funds are disbursed.

Interestingly—I'm not sure if you are aware of it; I think it is the only example of its kind, and I know it is of great excitement to the Jewish community—we are seeing the building of a new joint campus school in the part of west-central Scotland with the largest concentration of the Jewish community. The school is being built in Newton Mearns. It is a joint Jewish-Roman Catholic primary school, and I think it is the only example of its kind in Europe. So on the educational side, there is plenty to be said about what the Scottish Government has done in supporting the Holocaust Educational Trust, the moneys that have been put into countering intolerance and the support of schooling for the Jewish community.

At the other end, where it is necessary to prosecute, the Crown Office—the prosecuting service through the procurator fiscal in Scotland—will be supported. As I said before, 18 cases of hate crimes in Scotland is a small number, but it is 18 too many.

Q73 Mr Jayawardena: Do you not feel that those initiatives and the progress you are making are somewhat undermined by the point I raised earlier—the unrelenting focus of MSPs on issues relating to Israel? I accept that they are your equivalent of EDMs here, but none the less, 39 motions on Israel were raised in the Scottish Parliament against 26 on Syria—which undoubtedly has huge issues—16 on Iraq, six on Iran and only four on North Korea. The numbers tell a story. Going by the figures, we would be forgiven for thinking that the State of Israel is the biggest perpetrator of human rights abuses in the world. Do you really believe that the Israeli Government is comparable to, or indeed worse than, the regimes of Assad, Iran and North Korea? That is what those figures seem to imply.

Angus Robertson: First, I think it would be helpful for the Committee to be able to draw a comparison and know how many EDMs have been tabled during the last parliamentary Session in relation to Israel. Do I think there is a direct connection between the number of motions that have been tabled in the Scottish Parliament and the climate that the Scottish Jewish



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community feels, which makes them feel vulnerable and concerned? I think we need to take at face value the fact that they believe it is so.

That is why the First Minister and Kirsten Oswald, our colleague representing East Renfrewshire—the constituency with the largest concentration of the Jewish community—have been assiduously working with the different community representatives. It is why colleagues and I have been meeting with different Jewish organisations, both Scottish and UK-wide. It is why I am planning to go to Israel before the end of this year. Notwithstanding the fact that I do not believe there is a direct connection between the equivalent of early-day motions being tabled in the Scottish Parliament and the fear that people may have in the Scottish Jewish community that they are living in an unsettling climate, so long as people have that feeling, that is what matters, and we need to take it at face value.

We need to have a dialogue to explain that although colleagues may have very strongly held views about the treatment of the Palestinian people, it is within the context of supporting a two-state solution, and inherent in that is an acknowledgement of the right of self-determination for the Jewish people and the right of the State of Israel to exist. So long as there is a better understanding of both those things, hopefully that will lead to a better climate, but it is for the Jewish community in Scotland to say whether they are satisfied with that or not.

Q74 Mr Jayawardena: So you will work with the leadership in the Scottish Parliament to make sure that MSPs better understand the feeling of the Jewish community.

Angus Robertson: I do not need to do that because, to be frank, the Scottish Jewish community is assiduous in working with not only the SNP group in Westminster but colleagues in the Scottish Parliament. They are communicating very effectively how they feel to both parliamentarians and the Government.

Q75 Mr Jayawardena: Is the SNP group in the Scottish Parliament listening?

Angus Robertson: Absolutely.

Q76 Mr Jayawardena: Because at the moment they haven't actually acted on it.

Angus Robertson: I gently suggest to you that I think there is a false choice. I hope you are not suggesting that Members of the Scottish Parliament or, indeed, this Parliament should take their eye off the situation in Israel and Palestine and be uncritical of the Israeli Government. I think I am right in reading into your question that you would hope that all parliamentarians would at the same time make clear that they are not being critical of those of the Jewish faith per se—

Q77 Mr Jayawardena: Well, perhaps I can clarify. I suggest that it is important that all parliamentarians, whether in Westminster or the Holyrood Parliament, recognise the strength of feeling that there is and the way that their words and actions will be interpreted. At the moment,



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their words and actions are being interpreted badly.

Angus Robertson: I agree with you unequivocally that, if there is a fear in the Jewish community, we have to make sure the dialogue is there. I believe that it is and that it is getting better and better.

Chair: Thank you. You must be reassured that Mr Jayawardena takes such an interest in early-day motions in the Scottish Parliament.

Q78 **James Berry:** Mr Robertson, your party now occupies the left in Scotland—*[Interruption.]* Well, it's true.

Mr Winnick: According to your interpretation.

James Berry: According to the results.

Chair: Order.

James Berry: I don't think that is a disputed fact. Why do you think, Mr Robertson, that antisemitism is more of a problem in England on the left than it is in Scotland on the left?

Angus Robertson: Goodness. First, the SNP doesn't occupy anywhere. We are pleased to be able to represent almost every single parliamentary constituency. I'm not sure I feel qualified to answer that question. I can speak for my own party. I am sure that you would rather that this didn't become a party political slanging match, but I would draw attention to a number of things.

There are certain aspects of history, in relation to Scotland and the Jewish community, that are less known. For example, I think that Scotland is the only country, or one of the only countries, where there has never been a pogrom against the Jewish community. When the president of the board of deputies, in the form of the evidence you heard just before me, talked about this country and the expulsion of the Jews, he was talking about England. The Jews were not expelled from Scotland.

It is a small community—as I have said already, it is 5,000 or 10,000 strong—so there is a different reality. We are fortunate that we have a great many for a small population group of Scottish Jews who are very prominent in public life and have made a very positive contribution. I have to say that that is also the case in England. I draw the comparison with the statistics. If there are between 500 and 1,000 cases of hate crimes across the UK as a whole, but only 89 in Scotland, there is a significant difference. I think, to be fair, that the Jewish community is a significantly larger proportion of the population in the rest of the UK than it is in Scotland.

How the Labour party has got itself into this state is frankly beyond me. As was pointed out, it is not something that has, in all of its guises, emerged solely since the party's change in leadership, but all political leaderships have a responsibility to deal with what they say and how they say it.

Q79 **James Berry:** That was going to be my follow-up question. Do you think



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it actually has something to do with leadership and the fact that, in your leadership of the SNP here in Westminster, in every opportunity I have heard you take—at PMQs, etc.—you stand up resolutely against intolerance of all forms and for minorities at all times? So it is about leadership.

Angus Robertson: Yes. There can be no ambiguity about these things. As we know, in politics sometimes you have to say things rather a lot for them to be heard or noticed. That is why we shouldn't tire of saying that we are opposed to antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia or any form of political extremism. We just have to keep on repeating it, because unfortunately it tends to emerge in societies everywhere. There is narrowmindedness everywhere. There is narrowmindedness in Scotland, too, and we have a responsibility in our public life to stand up to it.

There is a particular strand of identity in Scotland which is quite important, which is a recognition that we kind of come from everywhere. If you haven't heard that, something that some of us take pride in is a song by the Proclaimers called "Scotland's Story" which reflects how the Scotland of today is the history—over centuries and centuries—of people who have come from elsewhere and who have made a contribution to our national life. The idea that our identity is based on some sort of blood and soil ideology is absolutely foreign.

Q80 **Chair:** Thank you very much for giving evidence today. We talked about the necessity for leaders, in particular, to speak with great care. If they don't and they are reckless with their language, where does it end? Does it end in scenarios like Orlando? Do communities feel that they are under such pressure that they are fearful that they would be attacked? Where does it end if this is not monitored and checked?

Angus Robertson: Moderate mainstream political voices have a responsibility both for what we say, but also for making sure that when there is an emerging trend, particularly within the mainstream democratic firmament, we point out how totally unacceptable that is. You asked me about that in relation to the United States, but there are examples in many—if not most—European countries of that kind of populist, extremist politics emerging, sadly. I think that those of us in the moderate mainstream have a responsibility to call it out for what it is, both here and abroad. I would wish colleagues across all political parties well in trying to make sure that that happens, because otherwise you have the normalisation of language or of imagery which is unacceptable, and we know from history where that leads.

I would be very cautious to suggest that, because of injudicious language that I would condemn emerging from certain people in the Labour party, we are one step away from Orlando or the holocaust. That is not where it is at, and we need to be careful that we are not over-egging the concerns that we have. But we must not forget the lessons of history. It started by demonising people of a religious group or a minority and we know where that ended. It is not a happy place, and we should make sure that that never happens again.



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Sadly, there is an ideology that is afoot and that has international reach now, that is seeking to target people of different faiths, including Jews, and now, as we know, LGBTI people in the United States. I fear that it is going to get worse before it gets better, but we have a responsibility to stand up against this—the language and the intolerance—and we need to do that at home and abroad.

Chair: Mr Robertson, you are extremely busy and the Committee as a whole is very grateful to you for coming here today and for being our first party leader to give us evidence. If there is anything else you want to write to us about before the inquiry is completed, we would be very happy to accept any written evidence. Thank you very much for coming in.

Angus Robertson: Thanks for having me.

Examination of witness

Witness: Ken Livingstone.

Q81 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming to give evidence today. Can I start by saying that I wrote you a letter asking you to come and you very readily wrote back and said that you would be kind enough to come here today, and we are most grateful? I should declare an interest, having known you for 32 years, and your having come to speak at my first election campaign in Richmond, which I subsequently lost by 13,000 votes. But we were very grateful for your support at that time.

You are a former parliamentarian. When we put questions to you it does not necessarily mean that we are speaking on behalf of ourselves. We are asking you questions which we deem important to our inquiry into antisemitism as a whole. This is not an inquiry into you or into the Labour party, but it is an inquiry that was suggested by my colleague David Winnick into antisemitism. So some of the things that you say are obviously going to be relevant, but we would like you to be aware of that.

We have had some strong criticism of you personally from the president of the board of deputies, and indeed the leader of the Scottish National party has just said that your comments were wrong and that you should have apologised. Do you want to take this opportunity to apologise for anything that you said in respect of any of the remarks that you have made? You very kindly supplied us with a very detailed account of your role in anti-racism over the last 40 years. Is there anything you want to say to this Committee at the beginning?

Ken Livingstone: If I had said that Hitler was a Zionist, I would apologise for that, because it is rubbish. What I said was—and you can still access this on the BBC website—that when Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy was that the Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism. He wanted all the half a million German Jews out. At that stage, his view was to move them out. By autumn 1933, he had negotiated a deal with a German Zionist organisation that led to 66,000 German Jews being moved to what is now Israel. Had the Zionists not negotiated that deal, those 66,000 Jews would have died in the gas chambers.



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Q82 **Chair:** Indeed, we will come on to that historical perspective. But to have the president of the board of deputies—and you have said in your very full statement to this Committee how, as Mayor of London, you worked with Jewish communities—say your comments were “abhorrent and offensive” must cause you concern. You are a politician. I know you do not hold elected office at the moment, but that the president of a group you have represented as Mayor and as a Member of Parliament for Brent—where there is a large Jewish community—is saying what you have said is “abhorrent and offensive” must cause you concern.

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely, and if I had said it, I would agree it was abhorrent. But I didn’t say it. I stated a simple historical fact. I had gone on to do that interview because I was defending the Labour party against the accusations that we had a big problem with antisemitism. Vanessa Feltz asked me whether what Hitler did was illegal and I pointed out there were two phases in his policy: one to move Jews to what is now Israel and then, the liquidation, the genocide. A simple statement of historical fact.

Q83 **Chair:** Again, we will come on to history shortly. People have said, Mr Livingstone, that you are antisemitic. Are you antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: I have had this accusation thrown at me many times over the 35 years since I became leader of the GLC. The simple fact is, it has only ever been thrown at me when I am being critical of the policies of the Israeli Government. If I denounce the South African Government as riddled with corruption, no one is going to say I am saying that because I am a racist. One thing that worries me very much is that by denouncing anyone who criticises the Israeli Government as antisemitic, it blurs the issue. Antisemitism is a crucial problem; as we heard earlier, there has been a big surge in antisemitic incidents. We need to be tackling that.

Q84 **Chair:** And in respect of anti-Zionism, are you anti-Zionist? Do you believe that the people of Israel have a right to occupy their own land and, therefore, have the right to self-determination? Are you anti-Zionist?

Ken Livingstone: Zionism has changed dramatically. In the 1930s—

Q85 **Chair:** What is your definition of Zionism?

Ken Livingstone: I do not think you can do one. In the 1930s, it was seen by 90% of the world’s Jews as an eccentric or extreme body—
[*Interruption.*]

Chair: Can I stop you for a minute? To the people sitting at the back of the gallery, when you are sitting there, it is to hear the proceedings. If you are going to have conversations and laugh to each other, we would prefer you to do it outside. Thank you.

Ken Livingstone: Now, I would assume the vast majority of Jewish people around the world perceive themselves as Zionists. It has become synonymous with Judaism and with the State of Israel. I have never been terribly interested in theory. I broadly like to focus on what is practical, so I am not terribly interested in how you got Zionism. I am interested in what we could do while I was Mayor to reduce antisemitic incidents.



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Q86 Chair: But do you believe in the right of Israel to occupy its own territory on the basis of self-determination? I understand you think the definition has changed, but what are your beliefs? It is a foreign policy issue, isn't it?

Ken Livingstone: If anyone wanted my advice in the Israeli Government, I would say I support the two-state solution, but you need one economy. There is no really safe, secure future for Israel until you totally integrate—that is, the Palestinians and the Israelis. That, I think, could become a much wider economic bloc. When Israel was created, the idea was to create a safe haven for the world's Jews. Is it safe? How far are we away from a terrorist group getting chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons?

Q87 Chair: We will come on to that, I am sure. In your interview with Vanessa Feltz on BBC London, you described it as over the top to think of antisemitism and racism as exactly the same thing. Do you not think that antisemitism and racism are the same thing—do you not believe that they are in the same category?

Ken Livingstone: If I said that it must have been a misquote, because they are exactly the same thing. Antisemitism is a form of racism where somebody loathes someone because they are Jewish, just as some other people loathe people because they are black or Asian.

Q88 Chair: And you are telling this Committee very clearly that you believe they are the same thing and that you believe very strongly that the criticisms of you as an antisemitic person are wrong—you are not antisemitic.

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely. If you actually look at the record I have put in the document I circulated, I have had 35 years in public office working with many Jewish organisations but often being criticised. The last time the board of deputies came to see me when I was Mayor, they came to say, "Could you please tone down your criticism of Israel?". I said, "Well, I do tone it down, actually." We had a very intense debate. That did not stop us then working together on a whole series of events.

Q89 Chair: And you made it very clear in your statement—you have given us a very full account. Of course, you quoted Judge Collins and what he said about you in the judgment; but do you not think that political leaders such as yourself should take great care in the way in which they use language, and that the wrong thing said at the wrong time could well be misinterpreted and that therefore, as you have said, you misspoke on the Vanessa Feltz programme?

Ken Livingstone: If I could go back in time and avoid referring to Hitler and Zionism in the Vanessa Feltz interview, I would.

Q90 Chair: Sorry—you would or you wouldn't?

Ken Livingstone: I would go back and remove it. It allowed all the anti-Jeremy people in the Labour Party to start whipping this up as an even bigger issue.



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Q91 **Chair:** So you would accept that the use of the example of Adolf Hitler in respect of what you have said was regrettable, and you wish that you had not brought that into the discussion.

Ken Livingstone: It is a simple statement of fact. I regret using it because it became this hysterical issue. In the midst of our campaign to do well in the local elections, the next day virtually every front page was about antisemitism and me. You had this ridiculous stuff on TV, seen by millions of people, of John Mann screaming that I am a Hitler apologist and a Nazi apologist. I don't think that it helped our campaign.

Q92 **Chair:** This Committee doesn't have a campaign—you mean the Labour party campaign.

Ken Livingstone: Yes. It is the only one I am involved in.

Q93 **Chair:** We will be hearing from Mr Mann. He is a witness before this Committee later on.

Finally from me, do you think that the Labour Party does have a problem with antisemitism? You said in interviews you have given that in your 45 years as a member, you have never come across anyone who has behaved in an antisemitic way. Is that right?

Ken Livingstone: It is 47 years. I have never heard anyone saying "antisemitic". I recall, back in 1970, someone complaining in Norwood Labour party that if blacks wanted to be part of Britain they shouldn't be doing songs such as "Young, Gifted and Black". That is the last time I heard a racist comment in the Labour party. Let's be honest: if you are a bigot, the Labour party is not likely to be your natural place to sign up and be involved in politics.

Q94 **Chair:** Do you think antisemitism is on the increase? In your 47 years in politics, has it got worse?

Ken Livingstone: Clearly, in the big influx of members Labour has had since last summer, we have had a few dozen who have said things that are antisemitic or can be interpreted as that. They have been suspended very rapidly.

Q95 **Chair:** So you accept that people in the Labour party have made antisemitic remarks, but not you?

Ken Livingstone: Yes, but we are talking about handfuls. I do not recall, in my 47 years, any Labour MP ever raising the issue of antisemitism in the Labour party, until three months ago when we had that very nasty campaign for the election of the youth delegate to Labour's national executive.

Q96 **James Berry:** When I was growing up, you made the new London mayorality about bringing London's diverse communities together, for which you are to be commended. But why is it that the only minority group that you have repetitively caused offence to is the Jewish community?



Ken Livingstone: Because I have always been a critic of the way the Israeli Government has treated Palestinians. I think it is one of the most appalling abuses of my lifetime. Not since the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin have we had an Israeli Prime Minister with the courage and strength of character and vision to start to think, "What can we do to pull the Israelis and the Palestinians together in one happy future?"

Q97 **James Berry:** Well, let me take you to an incident in 2005 that had nothing to do with the State of Israel, when an *Evening Standard* reporter was described by you as a "German war criminal", and when you found out—because he told you—that he was Jewish, you said, "All right...you might be, but actually you are just like a concentration camp guard," for which you refused to apologise.

In your submission, you referred us to Mr Justice Collins's comments when your suspension was revoked. What you didn't refer us to was where he also said in his judgment, "When he knew"—that "he" is you—"that Mr Finegold was particularly offended because he was Jewish, to go on to compare him to a concentration camp guard was indefensible...The appellant could have put the criticism to rest by apologising. He chose not to do so...He could and in my view should have apologised for any particular hurt occasioned, not only to him but to others, including, but not limited, to Jews..." And you did not apologise after that either. So, can I just ask you, Mr Livingstone, why it is that you have no compunction about using words and phrases that you know very well will offend Jewish people, and not apologising?

Ken Livingstone: I have often been offensive to reporters, and I think they have usually deserved it. The particular situation there was that we had many events at City Hall—receptions—and that night we had our first ever lesbian and gay reception, to commemorate Chris Smith becoming the first MP to come out. That was the first time the *Evening Standard* ever asked to be admitted to one of our receptions. I said no because, clearly, they were going to come along and be unpleasant. Then there was the guy outside at about 9 o'clock. I made it clear I wasn't going to talk to him. As I walked away, he pursued me, shouting the same question, and I was rude to him, yes. I'd have been rude to any journalist. There is no way I can tell a journalist is Jewish.

Q98 **James Berry:** Right, let us move to the more recent. I know you still don't apologise for that, but we will move to the more recent incident with Naz Shah. Now, Naz Shah did apologise, and apologise profusely, for what were disgraceful antisemitic comments on social media, but instead of acknowledging her apology, or even just remaining silent, you said her comments were not antisemitic and went on to say that Hitler had, in the initial stages, been supporting Zionism. Would you acknowledge that those comments merely poured petrol on the fire and caused very grave offence to Jewish people?

Ken Livingstone: I had never met Naz until the Labour party asked me to go and campaign for her at the election. I was incredibly impressed: here was a woman who had a very difficult life; she was in a viciously



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unpleasant campaign up against George Galloway. In my time with her, she said nothing antisemitic. She did some silly things on her website, one of which was using that economic study done in the United States, which showed that it would be cheaper if all Israel's Jews moved to America because America spends something like \$3 billion a year supporting the Israeli state. That's not antisemitic. I think her stuff was over the top, and particularly the remarks that she made—back in 2010, I think it was—but they were made at a time when there was a very unpleasant conflict going on, and she was obviously angry. I don't think she is antisemitic.

Q99 James Berry: Do you think—much as Mr Justice Collins found a decade ago—that your persistent and absolute refusal to apologise for offence you cause to Jewish people compounds the initial offence that you cause by your comments?

Ken Livingstone: Let us be absolutely clear about this. I couldn't move—these last few months, I can't get down the street without people stopping me and saying: "We know what you said is true. Don't give in." Of course, a lot of Jewish people in the community are offended because they've been told a lie—they've been told that I was a Nazi apologist. What appals me is that a handful of Labour MPs used this issue; deliberately lied about what I had said; and smeared me because they wished to undermine the leader of the Labour party. It's that simple. And I mean, they should be the ones being suspended.

Q100 James Berry: You deny that there is any problem with antisemitism in the Labour party, yet the former Labour MP, Tom Harris, said this: "If anyone still doubts that the Labour Party has a 'problem with Jews', they should look no further than Ken Livingstone. And you know the most depressing thing? The party membership will still re-elect him to the NEC at the next available opportunity." Do you think he's right?

Ken Livingstone: No.

James Berry: Thank you.

Q101 Chair: Somebody else has been quite critical. The new Mayor of London, your successor, Sadiq Khan, said that he wore a "badge of shame" over antisemitism in the Labour party, and that he wished that the Labour leadership could have been tougher on this issue. Do you think that Sadiq Khan is right to say that there should be a badge of shame worn because of a failure to take action?

Ken Livingstone: Sadiq ran a very good campaign, reaching out to all London's communities to try and bring them together, and I think that is exactly what he should do. I can only say, as someone said, until these few dozen recent—

Q102 Chair: I want you to answer the question about Sadiq Khan saying he wears a badge of shame over the failure to tackle antisemitism.

Ken Livingstone: I think it is wrong, because I don't think Labour has failed to tackle it. Under Jeremy Corbyn, the people who have said these antisemitic things have been suspended within days.



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Q103 **Mr Winnick:** The core of the controversy, Mr Livingstone, as you know, is the manner in which you stated that the Nazis wanted to move Jews to Israel—leaving aside, as you would recognise, that there was no Israel; you meant Palestine, presumably.

Ken Livingstone: Yes.

Q104 **Mr Winnick:** Could you give any evidence where Hitler or any of the other murderous gangsters said that was their policy?

Ken Livingstone: On 6 July 1920, Hitler made a speech in which he said this—and I quote: “Jews belong to Palestine and it is only there that they can expect their full civil rights”. And as I said, when he came to power, he negotiated a deal to move Germany’s Jews to Palestine. And I have never criticised the Zionist movement for making that deal, because the only other alternative at the time was the worldwide boycott of German goods by Jews all over the world, and as we saw with South Africa, that didn’t work then, and I don’t think it would have done. So they had to deal with who was in power, however repellent, however antisemitic, but it saved the lives of 66,000 Jews.

Q105 **Mr Winnick:** You gave a quote from 1920. From 1920 onwards, and particularly when the Nazis took power—when Hitler was appointed Chancellor on 30 January ’33—can you give any indication of documentary evidence where the Nazis said that the Jews should move to Palestine?

Ken Livingstone: Oh, the source. I know everyone’s going to say, “Well, Lenni Brenner is an old Trot and he is not an academic,” so I brought you, if you wish to see it, the December 1978 article in the University of Chicago Press’s *The Journal of Modern History*, by Francis R. J. Nicosia, who has a whole range of details about not just the movement of Germany’s Jews but the agreement that was reached with Adolf Eichmann and the Zionists, that shipments of Mauser pistols were sent to arm the Haganah. The simple fact is that you have to deal with—I watched Tony Blair have to deal with some really repellent regimes and embrace some of them. If you can’t stand evil people, you shouldn’t come into politics, because you have to deal with them.

Q106 **Mr Winnick:** When the Nazis took power, how did they treat the Jews?

Ken Livingstone: This is the appalling thing. There was a whole wave of antisemitic legislation. There was Kristallnacht. But if you—

Q107 **Mr Winnick:** No, before Kristallnacht. That was 1938. From the moment the Nazis took power, how did they treat the Jews?

Ken Livingstone: Awfully—

Q108 **Mr Winnick:** Did they deny them citizenship?

Ken Livingstone: Yes. It was all—

Mr Winnick: Mr Livingstone, if you would just answer the question: were they denied citizenship by 1935?



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Ken Livingstone: They were completely discriminated against from the moment—

Q109 **Mr Winnick:** In every conceivable way, without mass murder. Is that not the case?

Ken Livingstone: Pardon?

Mr Winnick: The Jews were discriminated against in every possible way, but mass murder certainly didn't take place until the war years. Is that correct?

Ken Livingstone: Yes—

Mr Winnick: And if I—

Chair: Mr Winnick, can you let the witness answer? He needs to answer the questions.

Ken Livingstone: If you look at the situation, from the moment Hitler came to power, antisemitic legislation, discrimination, absolutely endemic. The only group of Jews he worked with was the Zionists, and his deputy, Heydrich, wrote in 1935 or 1936 in his diary that "There are two kinds of Jews: those that wish to be assimilated and the Zionists, and the Zionists are the ones we should work with".

Q110 **Mr Winnick:** Jews were allowed to leave Germany. Would it be correct to say they were allowed to leave Germany on the basis that they forfeited all their assets?

Ken Livingstone: Yes. The deal done was that the bulk of their wealth had to stay in Germany, and the Zionist movement had to agree to buy German goods throughout the 1930s; yes.

Chair: Order. I think we need to try and address our questions to the current inquiry, although this is very interesting.

Ken Livingstone: History—I think—

Q111 **Mr Winnick:** What I am saying to you though, Mr Livingstone, is that the offence has been caused by the fact that you have said, in effect, that there was a general agreement between Zionists, as you describe them, and the Nazi Government. In fact, the only agreement, basically, was the one that you rightly referred to, which no one denies—the Haavara or transfer agreement, which allowed some 60,000 Jews to leave with their assets. Is that not so?

Ken Livingstone: That is exactly the one I was referring to. That was Hitler's support for Zionism, and at that World Zionist Congress, there was a vote of 240 to 48 opposing the worldwide boycott of Nazi goods.

Q112 **Mr Winnick:** Would it not also be the case that that agreement, far from being secretive or unknown, has been well documented? You wouldn't deny that.



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Ken Livingstone: So many stories have been written about it. It is published.

Q113 **Mr Winnick:** Mr Livingstone, can I ask you whether you feel that, by your actions and the manner in which you put your case over the matter which I have just spoken about, you haven't really advanced the Palestinian case effectively?

Ken Livingstone: Well, I don't know what I could do to do it. I mean, I don't think that Netanyahu's Government is particularly responsive to pressure from Obama, let alone anything I might be saying.

Q114 **Mr Winnick:** What I'm asking you is that, by the manner in which you've approached the subject—not for the first time, but particularly since this latest controversy—there has been a tendency, wrongly, in my view, as in yours, to link criticism of Israel with antisemitism? And what I'm saying to you—though I don't suppose for one moment that you will agree—is that you have helped that. In other words, people who say that criticising Israel is antisemitic point to you, and therefore, to a large extent, you have undermined the reasoned case for Palestinians, which is not, as we both agree, antisemitic at all.

Ken Livingstone: I spent a couple of weeks in Israel in 1986 as a guest of Mapam—the left wing of the Labour party. I found myself—I went everywhere except Gaza. They gave me a very extended tour. I stopped on a kibbutz, which seemed to be all filled with lefties like me. At that stage, there seemed to be a real potential for Israel coming to a deal and reaching out to the Palestinians. I think under Netanyahu we are getting no progress at all. Now, I support the two-state solution, and also one economy to lock it in place—perhaps to extend it eventually to neighbouring states.

Q115 **Chair:** Thank you. That's very helpful. As a follow-up, were you trying to advance the Palestinian cause in your interview with Vanessa Feltz and your subsequent comment? Is that why you did all this?

Ken Livingstone: No. The only thing we were talking about in all the interviews—not just with Vanessa—was, is there a problem with antisemitism in the Labour party? David here has been in the party a lot longer than I have. I don't think he would honestly say that we have been a vehicle for antisemitism.

Chair: Well, he is not a witness, so you can't ask him that question, but we can ask Mr Burrowes to continue with the questioning.

Q116 **Mr Burrowes:** Do you believe anti-Zionism can ever be antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: Do I—?

Mr Burrowes: Do you believe anti-Zionism can ever be antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: A lot of people will say things that are anti-Zionist because they are antisemitic, but criticising Israel does not mean you are a Jew-hater.



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Q117 **Mr Burrowes:** You said that the words "Hitler was a Zionist" are rubbish. Do you think that is antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: Hitler was antisemitic, no doubt, from his teenage years.

Q118 **Mr Burrowes:** So to say Hitler was a Zionist, you said earlier that is rubbish. Would you say that to say those words is antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: No; I mean, Hitler was not a Zionist. He—

Q119 **Mr Burrowes:** We know that, and we know that is rubbish; you said it is rubbish earlier. I am asking, if someone posted out the words, "Hitler was a Zionist," would you characterise that as being antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: I would characterise it as absolutely stupid and untrue. I mean, whether or not it is antisemitic—

Q120 **Mr Burrowes:** Would you agree that it is antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: I mean, if—

Mr Burrowes: Do you not—

Ken Livingstone: If you—

Q121 **Mr Burrowes:** Okay. Okay. Will you answer? Do you think it is antisemitic—that Hitler was a Zionist?

Ken Livingstone: I am not going to disagree that it isn't antisemitic; I just think it is so wildly untrue—

Q122 **Mr Burrowes:** So do you think it is antisemitic for a newspaper editor to portray the Prime Minister of Israel wearing an SS uniform, doing a straight-arm salute and standing on a pile of skulls? Would you term that as antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: No it's not, because the instance you are talking about was back in 1982, when we had the situation that Israel had invaded the Lebanon, and the Sabra and Shatila camps, with only women and children and elderly men in—

Mr Burrowes: I don't need the history.

Ken Livingstone: They were all slaughtered.

Q123 **Mr Burrowes:** If, as Mayor of London, this was one of the London newspapers that was going out, and if it got into your newspaper—this portrayal—would you have allowed it?

Ken Livingstone: I did allow it. I mean, it was in the *Labour Herald*, and it depicted Prime Minister Begin standing over a pile of the corpses in Nazi uniform. And the reason we did that was we took our cue from Albert Einstein; because when Begin visited America in 1948 to talk to American politicians, Albert Einstein got a leading group of American Jews to send a letter saying that American politicians shouldn't meet with Begin



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because—I quote—"Begin's party is closely akin to the Nazi and fascist parties." And I believe that to be true.

Q124 **Mr Burrowes:** Do you agree with the Macpherson definition of racism?

Ken Livingstone: Could you—? Look, I'm 71 on Friday and I've left me hearing aid at home. If you could speak up.

Q125 **Mr Burrowes:** Do you agree with the Macpherson definition of racism?

Ken Livingstone: Do I—?

Mr Burrowes: An easy question. The Macpherson definition of racism.

Ken Livingstone: Yes. We adopted that when I was Mayor.

Q126 **Mr Burrowes:** So do you accept that your remarks that you made are viewed by many as racist by the vast majority of Jews and their collective communal representative bodies? Do you agree that that is what they view as being racist?

Ken Livingstone: If they have heard the things that I am alleged to have said, they can feel that.

Q127 **Mr Burrowes:** Yes, but you just said you agree with the Macpherson definition, that, "A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other persons."

Ken Livingstone: Mm.

Q128 **Mr Burrowes:** Well, I am telling you that a vast majority of Jewish people and their communal representatives say what you have said is racist. So you accept that it is.

Ken Livingstone: But one thing that has struck me, of the people that have approached me on the streets these last five or six weeks, the number that have been Jewish, saying, "Don't MPs read about history? I know what you said is true."

Q129 **Mr Burrowes:** But you hold to the Macpherson definition.

Ken Livingstone: Yes.

Q130 **Mr Burrowes:** And we don't need to go out to the man on the Clapham omnibus, or the man on the street, but if there is a group of people—communal representatives and others—that feel that, as victims, that you have effectively said things that are racist, that it is—has to be investigated as racism.

Ken Livingstone: But if those—

Mr Burrowes: Do you agree with that?

Ken Livingstone: No. What I am saying is this: if those people had heard what I actually said, which is that Hitler supported Zionism, as opposed to seeing on television a Labour MP screaming I was a Nazi apologist—of course, if they think I am a Nazi apologist, they are going to think I am



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antisemitic, and that is deeply offensive. But most Jews are well educated, have done their history, and they know what I said was true.

Q131 **Mr Burrowes:** But if we look at—so you are basing it on the truth. You fought a number of elections in London, and if I was to look into recent electoral history, I would look to your manifestos for London as to the policy that you ran on. That is a fair enough comment. You said in your discussion with John Mann, after your comments—you said that it was the policy of the Nazis in 1932; that was the policy they ran on in 1932, that Jews should be moved to Israel. So, naturally speaking, we don't need to delve around 1978 articles or other so-called historians; we should look to the Nazi manifesto of 1932. Have you read it?

Ken Livingstone: Pardon?

Mr Burrowes: Have you read the Nazi manifesto—

Ken Livingstone: No. I have read some reports about it in the histories I have read of the time. I haven't got a copy of Hitler's manifesto.

Q132 **Mr Burrowes:** Why not? If you are going to really hold on to this commitment—this remark, that you will know is controversial and you will know it has offended many people and individuals—then surely, as a politician of old, you will know that the first place you look is the manifesto. Have you—you haven't read it?

Ken Livingstone: I haven't read—I haven't got a copy of Hitler's manifesto.

Q133 **Mr Burrowes:** Well, can I invite you to?

Ken Livingstone: I was dead—he was dead before I was born.

Q134 **Mr Burrowes:** Perhaps you might want to look into history and read it. And you will not see any policy around that you said is truth.

Ken Livingstone: Hitler went into that election saying his policy was to move Germany's Jews to what was then Palestine.

Q135 **Mr Burrowes:** You are basing that on articles—

Ken Livingstone: He said it. He said it in 1920. I have just given you that quote.

Q136 **Mr Burrowes:** You are not basing it on any manifesto that was around at the time.

Ken Livingstone: Well, hang on. My main point at that time was to try and make sure that John Mann didn't get—I was not trying to work John Mann up, in case he took a swing at me, frankly. I was trying to calm him down because he seemed to be on the edge of violence.

Q137 **Mr Burrowes:** It doesn't matter about John Mann. What matters is that you have deeply offended a huge number of people—not least in my constituency in London and beyond—who treat what you said as profoundly offensive and racist. Do you not want at least to apologise to



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them? **Ken Livingstone:** If anyone has been hurt by what I said, I am of course sorry about that, but I came into politics to tell the truth, and I have always told the truth. I am sure I have often been wrong. I have never knowingly lied and I tell people the truth. I think one of the weaknesses of our political system is that we don't study our history or learn from it.

Q138 **Mr Umunna:** Our party's constitution says that the Labour party is a democratic, socialist party and that we seek to create, among other things, a community where we "live together freely in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect". Those are among the values to which I subscribe. Would you subscribe to them, too?

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely.

Q139 **Mr Umunna:** It also says in our constitution that, in order to achieve those values, we seek to create a society that "delivers people from the tyranny of...prejudice". Would you agree with that?

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely.

Q140 **Mr Umunna:** As has already been said, well over 6 million Jewish people were killed during the Holocaust at the behest of Hitler. Do you believe that conflating Zionism with Hitler's views, which you did in the Vanessa Feltz interview, causing obvious and foreseeable offence to Jewish people, runs counter to the spirit of solidarity and respect towards others that our party's constitution demands of us?

Ken Livingstone: Telling the truth cannot do that. I have had Jewish people stop me on the street—a disproportionate amount; hundreds of people have stopped me on the street—to say, "We know what you said is true." Disproportionately those people have been Jewish because they know their history.

Q141 **Mr Umunna:** The public will be the judge of that. I want to understand your motivations in making the comments that you have, and I am not totally clear what the answers were when the Chair asked you earlier about your attitude towards the Jewish state. For the sake of clarity, do you believe in the right of Jewish people to self-determination?

Ken Livingstone: Yes.

Q142 **Mr Umunna:** Do you believe in the right of the State of Israel to exist? Then why did you say in an interview with the Arabic TV station, Al Ghad Al Arabi, "The creation of the State of Israel was fundamentally wrong."? In the same interview you said, "The creation of the State of Israel was a great catastrophe." If you believe in the right of Jewish people to self-determination and the right of Israel to exist, how can you say those things?

Ken Livingstone: What I am pointing out is that a majority of survivors of the Holocaust did not want to go to Israel. They wanted to be absorbed primarily into America or Britain. I think it was a mistake not to give them that choice. The simple fact is, you will recall, that when the State of Israel was created the first Prime Minister urged all America's 5.5 million Jews to



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leave America and come and live in Israel. One fifth of one per cent. did in 15 years. That is the tragedy.

Q143 **Mr Umunna:** So, do you stand by the statement that the creation of the State of Israel was fundamentally wrong and a great catastrophe? Do you stand by what you said, yes or no?

Ken Livingstone: It is a catastrophe in the sense that—

Q144 **Mr Umunna:** So you do.

Ken Livingstone: No, no. It is a catastrophe in the sense that the deal done was for two states and a division. The tragedy is—and it is the legacy that still leads to violence today—that 700,000 Palestinians were driven out of their homes illegally at gun point. The Prime Minister of Israel said, “The old will die and the young will forget.” They have not. There are still 3 million in refugee camps.

Q145 **Mr Umunna:** Sorry, we only get a small amount of time to ask you questions. Either you thought it was wrong, and it was a great catastrophe, or not. Yes or no?

Ken Livingstone: It was right to say that we will create a haven for those Jews who wish to go there. It was not right for the Israeli Government to expel—

Q146 **Mr Umunna:** Ken, was it a catastrophe and was it wrong or not?

Ken Livingstone: It was not wrong to create it. It was a catastrophe to expel at gun point 700,000 Palestinians from their homes.

Q147 **Mr Umunna:** Sorry—that was not the question I asked.

Ken Livingstone: But that is the answer I am giving. That is why we have not got peace in the middle east now.

Mr Umunna: Can I ask you another question?

Chair: Order. Mr Livingstone, would you wait for Mr Umunna?

Q148 **Mr Umunna:** Could I just move on a little bit from this and ask you whether you disagree that those who do not recognise the State of Israel or its right to exist are antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: You cannot simply say because somebody is opposed to the creation of the State of Israel they are antisemitic.

Q149 **Mr Umunna:** Hang on. If a person thinks that the State of Israel does not have the right to exist, you do not regard that as antisemitic.

Ken Livingstone: Many of them will be antisemitic, some will not. Let’s not forget we promised the Arabs an Arab Government at the same time we promised the Israelis. We lied.

Mr Umunna: I don’t need a history lesson; I just need a straight answer.

Chair: Order. Let Mr Livingstone finish his comments.



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Ken Livingstone: The British Government lied. It told the Arabs that if you fight on our side in world war one, you will be given a Hashemite kingdom. Instead, we split it all up between France and ourselves. We created a legacy of conflict that is still there today.

Q150 **Mr Umunna:** James Berry just talked about some of this: the various different things that you have said completely separate to what the State of Israel is accused of doing, or may or may not have done. Look at the catalogue: in 1982, the cartoon depicting the Israeli Prime Minister as a Nazi officer; in 2005, calling a Jewish reporter a Nazi concentration camp guard; in 2014, a "Newsnight" interview where you suggest that Jewish people are unlikely to vote for the Labour party as they get more wealthy; and all your various utterances recently. Would you make the same kinds of comments about black people—yes or no? Please just answer the question.

Ken Livingstone: You can't have a yes or no answer on this. Look at the result of the election last year—

Mr Umunna: I am not asking you what the result of the election was. I am just asking you whether you would make the same comments in respect of black people.

Ken Livingstone: You asked me for my views about why Jewish people vote as they do. Last year—

Mr Umunna: That—

Chair: Order. Mr Umunna, you must let the witness answer.

Mr Umunna: But he is not answering my question.

Ken Livingstone: You don't like the answer—that is different.

Mr Umunna: You haven't answered the question.

Chair: Order. I am chairing this meeting. Mr Livingstone will answer and then Mr Umunna will ask again. It is for the witness to decide what they want to say.

Ken Livingstone: We went into the election led by a Jewish leader. Over 60% of British Jews voted for the Conservatives and 22% voted Labour. We can argue about why they did and did not then. I think 50 years ago that would have been a very different figure. Look at the facts—

Q151 **Mr Umunna:** Aren't you just stereotyping a whole group of people?

Ken Livingstone: I am not stereotyping; I am looking at the data published by the pollsters. Look at the facts of my record as Mayor. In seven of the eight years I was Mayor, antisemitic incidents were reduced. The only year they were not reduced was 2006, when in the aftermath of the invasion of Lebanon the figures did not move down—they did not go up. In the rest of Britain and across Europe, according to the Community Security Trust, they doubled. Whatever you may say, my period as Mayor



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saw a reduction in antisemitic incidents. In Boris Johnson's first year, I think they went up 50%. So you might not agree with what I say, but the legacy of what I have done should bear some study.

Chair: Mr Umunna, a final question.

Mr Umunna: I just say this to Mr Livingstone. You were born in my constituency and you went to school in it. I and many other Labour colleagues of all backgrounds and faiths campaigned not just once but twice for you to be Mayor, and I think you campaigned for me. You did help reduce poverty, you did help reduce inequality and you did improve the housing situation in our capital city. But you are not a historian. You are a politician. And by needlessly and repeatedly offending Jewish people in this way you have not only betrayed our Labour values but betrayed your legacy as Mayor because all you are now going to be remembered for is becoming a pin-up for the kind of prejudice that our party was built to fight against. That is a huge shame and it is an embarrassment. You know what? I will get trolled incessantly after this exchange. I don't care—

Chair: Mr Umunna, please put your question if you are putting one. This is not an opportunity to make statements. What is your question? Is there a question for Mr Livingstone?

Mr Umunna: I am just making a comment since he will not answer any of my questions.

Q152 **Chair:** Mr Livingstone, would you like to reply?

Ken Livingstone: All I would say is, if you look back, many of the things I have said have been controversial. When I defended lesbian and gay rights in 1981, we were denounced. When we said we needed to negotiate with the IRA, we were denounced. The simple fact is, show me what I got wrong in those times. I was just prepared to challenge the bigotry of the day and I am prepared to challenge bigotry today.

Mr Umunna: I will challenge your bigotry, too.

Q153 **Chair:** Order. I am sure Mr Umunna will put those views down and write to you and you can reply to him, but it is not—

Ken Livingstone: I will take him out for a meal—that will be easier.

Chair: It is not for this Committee, I am afraid.

Q154 **Victoria Atkins:** I have read your pleading that you helpfully provided to the Committee this afternoon. It is two and a half pages of close type. It has 25 paragraphs, and in it you treat us to the views of a professor, a High Court judge and President Obama, and you talk about bridge-building initiatives. Nowhere in this document is there an apology for causing the offence you have caused. I give you this opportunity now, Mr Livingstone. Will you apologise?

Ken Livingstone: If I had said something that was untrue and it caused offence, I would apologise. What I said was true. What caused offence was



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a group of embittered old Blairite MPs running around lying about what I had said. It's no good you wriggling away, Chuka Umunna. Describing me as a Nazi apologist is a lie. I could have sued, but I am not going to waste my time.

Victoria Atkins: I have not finished with you yet, Mr Livingstone.

Chair: Order. Mr Livingstone, it would be better to keep personalities out of this and concentrate on the questions that Vicky Atkins is going to put to you now, rather than referring to members of the Committee.

Q155 **Victoria Atkins:** Mr Arkush, who is a father and a grandfather, said this afternoon as you sat behind him that your recent comments had made him feel, among other emotions, sad, shocked and insecure. Do you apologise to him personally for your comments?

Ken Livingstone: You should remember what he also said. He claimed that I had said Hitler was a Zionist. That was the lie that was peddled in the aftermath of my interview. I didn't say that. You can go and listen to the recording. I said he was a supporter, but he wasn't a Zionist; he was antisemitic.

Q156 **Victoria Atkins:** So you are blaming Mr Arkush for the offence you have inadvertently caused. Is that your answer?

Ken Livingstone: No, I am blaming the people who lied about what I said: both MPs and journalists.

Q157 **Victoria Atkins:** You said in the Vanessa Feltz interview, "I've been in the Labour party for 47 years; I've never heard anyone say anything antisemitic." Having heard the question from Mr Burrowes about the Macpherson definition of racism; having heard Mr Arkush's evidence about his views on your comments, which he said were antisemitic; and given you were a member of the Labour party at the time you said them, do you now retract that comment?

Ken Livingstone: Which comment is that?

Q158 **Victoria Atkins:** That you have never heard anyone say anything antisemitic, because the view of many people is that you yourself said something antisemitic.

Ken Livingstone: As I said, in 47 years I never heard anyone say anything antisemitic. It is only in this last three months that we have had a few stupid blogs and so on, but the Labour party suspended the people who did that.

Q159 **Victoria Atkins:** In the same interview, you said, "There has been a very well-orchestrated campaign by the Israel lobby to smear anybody who criticises Israeli policy as antisemitic." Is Mr Arkush part of that policy?

Ken Livingstone: I doubt that.

Q160 **Victoria Atkins:** Later, in an interview with *Daily Politics*, you said the following: "I think blurring these two things undermines the importance



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of antisemitism because a real antisemite doesn't just hate the Jews in Israel; they hate their Jewish neighbours in Golders Green or Stoke Newington. It's a physical loathing." Are you saying there are gradations of antisemitism, and is the light version just hating the Jews in Israel? Is that slightly better than hating Jews in Israel and in Golders Green and Stoke Newington?

Ken Livingstone: No. I'm saying that anybody who hates Jews, whether they are in Golders Green or whether they are in Israel, is antisemitic and racist.

Q161 **Victoria Atkins:** Ms Chakrabarti, who is holding this report for the Labour party, is not calling you to give evidence to her consultation. Would you like to defend your position in her review? Would you like to give evidence?

Ken Livingstone: I was acutely disappointed when I read that. I can't see any justification for my not being called and questioned by that inquiry. I can't understand why not.

Q162 **Victoria Atkins:** Do you encourage her, therefore, to call you as part of the inquiry?

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely.

Q163 **Victoria Atkins:** After all the evidence we have heard today about the effect on great numbers of Jewish people, but also on individuals like the witness we heard at the beginning of our evidence, do you still believe that your suspension from the Labour party was caused by embittered MPs?

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely.

Q164 **Victoria Atkins:** Mr Livingstone, would it be fair to say that, when it comes to your role in this antisemitism report, you are the victim, and everybody else is out to get you, whether it is the Israeli lobby or the embittered MPs or Tories who have somehow got something to do with I don't know what? It's all a conspiracy against you.

Ken Livingstone: They are not out to get me because I am a retired pensioner. I am like a househusband. They are out to get Jeremy Corbyn and that is why they whipped up this hysteria about antisemitism. It will fade away now because they are preparing to blame him in case we vote to leave the Common Market—the EU. That is the next attack. If you actually look, the MPs who smeared me about antisemitism have been criticising Jeremy Corbyn and stabbing him in the back for the last nine months on a whole series of issues.

Q165 **Victoria Atkins:** So the upset you have caused is hysterical. That is your view of it?

Ken Livingstone: No. The upset was caused by those MPs who lied, saying that I was a Nazi apologist. Someone watching that on television—of course they were going to be concerned. What I find appalling about the motivation of those MPs is that they are prepared to cause worry and



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doubt and confusion amongst our Jewish community in this country just for short-term political gain.

Q166 **Stuart C. McDonald:** I think you said at the outset that you would have apologised if you had said that Hitler was a Zionist but you are not apologising for saying that he was supporting Zionism. I do not quite get that distinction.

Ken Livingstone: You will have to speak up—I left my hearing aid at home.

Q167 **Stuart C. McDonald:** You said at the outset that you would have apologised, and you would have been wrong for saying that Hitler was a Zionist, but you are not going to apologise for saying that Hitler supported Zionism. I am not clear on the distinction—why you would apologise for one and not the other.

Ken Livingstone: As I read out from the various quotes—if you want I can leave you the history document that has got all that stuff in it—Hitler did support Zionism, not because he didn't hate Jews, but because he saw that as a way of getting rid of them. Why would I apologise for stating historical fact? You wouldn't ask me to apologise for saying that two plus two makes four.

Q168 **Stuart C. McDonald:** That wasn't really Zionism though, was it? Forced expulsion to a state is somewhat different from establishing a state to which people are welcome to move. It's not the same thing.

Ken Livingstone: I am really having problems hearing you, I'm afraid.

Q169 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Surely you recognise that that isn't supporting Zionism? Creating a state and forcibly expelling people to it is very different from having a state that is established and then people are welcome to move to it.

Ken Livingstone: He supported the Zionists because, by doing that deal, the Zionists undermined the worldwide boycott of German goods that were organised by Jewish groups all over the world. In 1937—in August I think—there was a meeting at the German Foreign Ministry of senior Nazi officials who were all worried that the movement of Jews to what was then Palestine could lead to the creation of a Jewish state, which would become a focus for anti-Nazism. They were recommending to Hitler that he stop that. Hitler directed them to continue to move the Jews to Palestine.

Q170 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Putting aside these historical debates, and putting aside your view that there isn't a problem with antisemitism in the Labour party, you must surely accept that the relationship between that party and the Jewish community is now at what we might say is a low ebb. How would you advise Jeremy Corbyn to repair that relationship?

Ken Livingstone: We have to demonstrate through Shami Chakrabarti's study that we have had a look at this. It will be published. I suspect that she will come back and say, "Yes, you had a handful of people who joined the Labour party in this last big in-surge of people who have said



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antisemitic things. They have been suspended. But there is no inherent antisemitism in the Labour party any more than there is any form of racism.”

Q171 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Beyond denying that there is a problem, is there anything that Jeremy Corbyn should do proactively to try and repair the relationship with the Jewish community?

Ken Livingstone: We should do the sort of things I did as Mayor, which is to work with the Jewish community. One of the things that we did when we started doing an annual Holocaust Memorial event at City Hall was to specifically target schoolchildren because we found that many schoolchildren knew nothing about this. They thought that the second world war was between us and the Soviet Union. We don’t teach enough history in our schools. Kids are growing up ignorant of the Holocaust.

Q172 **Chair:** How do you think we should tackle antisemitism?

Ken Livingstone: I think you have to explain the history of what has happened to the Jewish community over 2,000 years: their expulsion by the Romans, the antisemitism that was endemic in so many countries. Britain—England as it then was—expelled its Jewish community. Let us understand the history. We put on events in Trafalgar Square where we celebrated Jewish events alongside Hindu and Muslim ones, so other people get to come and see that the people living next door to them are just the same as they are.

Q173 **Chair:** So it is historical—you have to explain the history?

Ken Livingstone: History repeats itself again and again. We should study it.

Q174 **Tim Loughton:** Mr Livingstone your interpretation of history is a bit dodgy isn’t it?

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q175 **Tim Loughton:** You said, “Let’s remember when Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism. This before he went mad and ended up killing 6 million Jews.” At what point wasn’t Hitler mad?

Ken Livingstone: I was asked a question about Hitler in the middle of an interview. I really didn’t want to get into a discussion about Hitler and Zionism in the 1930s. I dealt with it in 40 words and moved back to the issue of whether there was a problem with antisemitism. If the BBC want to give me half an hour to do a history of the period, I would be delighted to do it.

Q176 **Tim Loughton:** Okay. Professor Jeffrey Herf, author of the award-winning book “Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust” said, “In short, in both word and deed, Nazi Germany did all it could to ensure that a Jewish state in Palestine never would emerge”, and



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that Livingstone is "oblivious of the following well-established historical facts...Hitler despised Zionism...viewed the prospect of a Jewish state in Palestine as part of the broader international...conspiracy which his fevered imagination presented as a dire threat to Germany." Why do you know more than Professor Herf?

Ken Livingstone: I know some things that clearly he doesn't. He clearly has not heard of the incident that I referred to briefly. It was on the 29 July 1937, when Hitler directed that the movement of Jews to Palestine would continue, overriding those senior Nazis meeting in the Foreign Office, who were worried that it was going to lead to the creation of a Jewish state. He followed that up with a second directive in January 1938. And in 1938—

Q177 **Tim Loughton:** Was that his mad period or his sane period?

Ken Livingstone: I don't know whether he was sane or insane. If you read about the period in the last two or three years of his life, he was obviously completely unbalanced and took manic decisions.

Q178 **Tim Loughton:** Only in the last two years. Okay. Let's go to current times. Do you think Donald Trump is a racist?

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely. He is, like so many people—

Q179 **Tim Loughton:** A yes will do. We have heard from you this afternoon no essence of an apology for comments you have made. We have heard that you have not heard an antisemitic or racist comment within the Labour party since 1970. We have heard that Zionism has changed dramatically—that is another of your defences. And we have heard that many Jewish people have come up to you on a street—I would like to know which street this is—to tell you, "We know what you said is true." By the same token, when various Hispanic Americans go up to Donald Trump and tell him, "We know what you are saying is true about the wall," then, under your terms, he is not actually a racist, is he?

Ken Livingstone: No, anybody who supports Trump's attempt to build a wall or to deport people of Mexican origin living in America is clearly racist.

Q180 **Tim Loughton:** So why, if Jewish people are telling you that your comments, which have been widely interpreted as anti-Jewish and antisemitic, are not racist, why does the same not apply to Donald Trump? I take the view that both of you have been racist in those comments. Why are the rules different for you than for Donald Trump?

Ken Livingstone: It is a simple fact in life. I am telling the truth.

Q181 **Tim Loughton:** Okay. I don't think we are going to get further on that one, are we?

You said there have been no incidents that you have come across of antisemitism or racism in the Labour party since 1970. That could be down to three things: one: there has been no racism or antisemitism in the Labour party since 1970—unlikely. Two: there has been racism, but you have been rather sheltered from it and lived a rather charmed



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existence in the Labour party. Or, three: there has been racism and antisemitism but you don't recognise it as racism or antisemitism. Which do you think is true?

Ken Livingstone: The simple fact is, as I said, I don't recall in my 47 years in the party any Labour MP ever raising this issue until three months ago when we were having the youth election to the NEC—not once. I was on Labour's NEC under Neil Kinnock, under Tony Blair and under Ed Miliband. Never once did we have a complaint come in about antisemitism. You could actually ask the Labour party for access to their files to see if there is any record of that.

Q182 **Tim Loughton:** Okay, I think we'll go for the sheltered option.

If you were to say to a black person, "Why don't you go back to the country where you came from?" do you think that is racist?

Ken Livingstone: Yes.

Q183 **Tim Loughton:** So why, in 2006, when you were Mayor, did you tell the Reuben brothers to "Go back to where you came from"?

Ken Livingstone: Because they were undermining our Olympic bid and delaying the start of the project.

Q184 **Tim Loughton:** If they had been two black people undermining the Olympic bid, it wouldn't be racist to tell them to go back—

Ken Livingstone: I have been very rude about them because they have a pattern—

Q185 **Tim Loughton:** We get this excuse that you're allowed to be rude because you're just Ken.

Ken Livingstone: I was not rude to them because they were Jewish; I was rude to them because they were delaying our Olympic project.

Q186 **Tim Loughton:** Did you not know that the Reuben brothers were Jewish?

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q187 **Tim Loughton:** Isn't there a clue?

Ken Livingstone: Excuse me, but I have been an atheist since I was 12. Unless someone turns up wearing religious garb, I do not recognise religion.

Q188 **Tim Loughton:** So you had no inkling that there was a possibility, slightly, that Mr Reuben and Mr Reuben could possibly be Jewish?

Ken Livingstone: I don't look at people thinking, "Are you black, or Jewish?"—or anything. I just deal with them. My objection was that they were stalling the development of the Olympic site, which is their classic pattern in all their major land holdings.

Q189 **Tim Loughton:** Mr Livingstone, are those not grounds for saying, "I don't agree with what you are trying to do; please don't do that," rather than



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saying, "Go back to where you came from," which, in your own words, you have admitted is racist? You are now seriously trying to tell this Committee that you had no inkling that Mr Reuben and Mr Reuben were Jewish.

Ken Livingstone: Absolutely not. I was just being rude to them. Let me admit now, if you want a confession, that often in my life I have been rude to people. Usually they have deserved it. The Reubens deserved it because they were endangering the development of our Olympic project—

Chair: Order. The Olympics development is not part of this, but the point is well taken, Mr Loughton.

Q190 **Nusrat Ghani:** You have talked a lot about history—and Friday is your birthday, so happy birthday. We have gone through some of the points you have used over the last couple of years over time and history. You tend to reference Hitler and Nazi Germany a lot when you are offended by people, which is a very rare thing to do. When you are offended by people you can say anything, but to bring up Hitler and Nazi Germany all the time, you either have a very unhealthy obsession with Hitler and Nazi Germany or you are quite relaxed in trivialising the Holocaust and the atrocities that Hitler carried out.

Ken Livingstone: I was born in 1945. I grew up in that post-war Britain when my parents' generation thought the war was the defining issue of their lives. They talked about it all the time; we went to see films about it at the cinema; there were series on the television. People used terms such as "jumped-up little Hitler", or "behaving like a concentration camp guard" right through that period. Every day, when I step outside my front door, I see the site opposite my house where a V-bomb destroyed all the homes opposite—

Q191 **Nusrat Ghani:** If I can interrupt, Mr Livingston. Over time, people can learn what is appropriate or inappropriate. I remember growing up and seeing posters saying, "No blacks, no Irish, no dogs" when you wanted to rent a property. You wouldn't refer to that now; you wouldn't put up such a poster. So why would you refer to PE instructors as rehabilitated Nazi war criminals, or reference housing policy to Nazi bombing? For example, to the Reubens, whom you had no idea were Jewish, back in 2006 you said, "Go back to Iran and try your luck with the ayatollahs." Why is there one rule for some people and one rule for Jewish people?

Ken Livingstone: No, no. I have just been rude very often in my political career.

Q192 **Nusrat Ghani:** But you can be rude and not say things that are offensive to a particular group.

Ken Livingstone: I was rude to the Reuben brothers to put them in the spotlight for what they were doing—and it worked. Within a few weeks they had sold out their holding on the site for the Olympics and we got on with its development.

Q193 **Nusrat Ghani:** You said earlier on that you agree that antisemitism is



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racism. Earlier on Mr Arkush said that you were antisemitic. Would you agree that you have been racist in some of the comments you have made?

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q194 **Nusrat Ghani:** So everybody else can be antisemitic and racist but you, Mr Livingstone, cannot be antisemitic and racist?

Ken Livingstone: You just look at my record, which I spelt out in the statement I gave you. I have challenged every form of bigotry and prejudice throughout my political career, whether it was homophobia, antisemitism, racism or sexism. Over that period, in the last 35 years, we have moved on as a country. I think we are probably the least prejudiced in the west.

Q195 **Nusrat Ghani:** But you have not moved on, because you keep referencing Hitler and Nazi Germany. You have not moved on.

Ken Livingstone: For my generation, the war is always going to be a defining part of the way we think about things.

Q196 **Nusrat Ghani:** And did you grow up in a generation where people were offensive to black people and Asian people?

Ken Livingstone: Oh God, yes. The racism was endemic.

Q197 **Nusrat Ghani:** Do you use those terms now or not?

Ken Livingstone: But we have moved on.

Q198 **Nusrat Ghani:** You have not moved on for Jewish people, but you have for black and Asian people?

Ken Livingstone: I am not critical of Jewish people. I am critical of Israel and its policies towards the Palestinians.

Q199 **Nusrat Ghani:** Even though the way you have commented and caused offence by using antisemitic terms is not racist, but it would be for anybody else who used them?

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q200 **Nusrat Ghani:** Okay. You also said, looking back at history, that the conversation on antisemitism is a hysterical issue, brought up by a "handful of Labour MPs" who have it in for Mr Corbyn, and that it did not exist until the last few months.

In 2014, a Labour councillor was quoted as saying that "it would have been wiser to create Israel in America, it's big enough. They could relocate even now." Those comments were noted earlier on by Mr Arkush as antisemitic. Another Blackburn councillor said, "Apartheid at its best. Zionist Jews are a disgrace to humanity." That was in June 2015. Then there is Vicki Kirby, a Labour candidate in Woking, who said "What do you know about Jews? They've got big noses and support Spurs" and "Who is the Zionist God? I am starting to think it might be Hitler." This was in the last three months, so it cannot be a conspiracy among a



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handful of Labour MPs who are trying to have a pop at Mr Corbyn.

Ken Livingstone: No, but it is only in the last few months that those comments have been exposed and been in the media. We did not hear about them before. Had we heard about them before, Ed Miliband would have suspended them.

Q201 **Nusrat Ghani:** But why didn't you hear about them before? If you are constantly listening to people on the street, why will you not listen to people in the Labour party?

Ken Livingstone: They weren't published. We did not see them in the papers.

Q202 **Nusrat Ghani:** You did not come across any form of antisemitism?

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q203 **Nusrat Ghani:** But how would you recognise antisemitism if you believe that it is racism for some people in the community but not for others—not for people like you or others on the hard left? Can they not be antisemitic and racist at the same time? Or maybe they are not antisemitic and racist at all?

Ken Livingstone: All I can say is what I have experienced: I have never heard anyone say anything antisemitic. The comments that you have now mentioned—

Q204 **Nusrat Ghani:** You have just been told that the comments you have made are antisemitic. You have just been told that.

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q205 **Nusrat Ghani:** They are not. And the comments that I quoted, they not antisemitic either.

Ken Livingstone: No. I am not an antisemite. I have worked closely with the Jewish community. I remember the son of the Reuben brothers phoning me to say, "We know you are not antisemitic—you just wanted my parents out of this deal."

Q206 **Nusrat Ghani:** If there is no antisemitism in the Labour party and you are not antisemitic, why is Shami Chakrabarti undertaking an inquiry? Is it just a bit of window-dressing?

Ken Livingstone: Because we have to demonstrate to the people of Britain that there is not a problem with antisemitism.

Q207 **Nusrat Ghani:** So it is just a demonstration.

Ken Livingstone: She will investigate it. She is a woman of incredible integrity and intelligence. If she discovers that there is, we will have to deal with it.

Q208 **Nusrat Ghani:** But she won't discover that there is, because you cannot be antisemitic and/or racist and be of the hard left like yourself.



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Ken Livingstone: Be realistic. If you were really antisemitic, you would not have joined a Labour party led by a Jewish leader between 2010 and 2015.

Q209 **Nusrat Ghani:** But you carried on making antisemitic comments that were noted as antisemitic by the vast majority of the population apart from yourself.

Ken Livingstone: Yes, but we only discovered that when the press revealed it earlier this year. It was not in the newspapers when they tweeted those things back in 2014.

Q210 **Nusrat Ghani:** Have you offered to give evidence to the inquiry?

Ken Livingstone: I just did, here.

Q211 **Nusrat Ghani:** You will insist on giving evidence to the inquiry?

Ken Livingstone: I would love to give evidence. I have enjoyed all of this. I am sure I will enjoy Shami even more.

Q212 **Nusrat Ghani:** One of the things that Mr Arkush said—I think Ms Atkins referred to it—was that the comments that you made made him feel insecure. Speaking as a person who had probably faced more racism in her lifetime by the age of 15 than you will ever face, do you want to apologise for the offence that you have caused him and everybody else?

Ken Livingstone: To anyone who has been upset by what I say, I am sorry. But what I said is true: literally, Hitler supported Zionism. That is it—one sentence. Show me it isn't true. In one of my interviews I said "If anyone can prove that what I said isn't true, I'll take them to the best dinner of their lives." Oddly enough, no one has come up with it. Will any of you demonstrate that what I said isn't true? That is the fact of the matter. I came into politics to tell the truth.

Chair: It may be that nobody actually wants to have dinner with you, Mr Livingstone. *[Laughter.]*

Q213 **Mr Jayawardena:** Mr Livingstone, before I ask my substantive questions I would like three points of clarification. They can be answered yes or no. Is it antisemitic to publicly embrace a leading Islamist who says that the Jews had it coming and that the Holocaust was divine retribution—yes or no?

Ken Livingstone: No.

Q214 **Mr Jayawardena:** Thank you. Is it antisemitic to say that Jews were important in financing the slave trade?

Ken Livingstone: That is not true. That is clearly antisemitic—it is not true.

Q215 **Mr Jayawardena:** Is it antisemitic—yes or no?

Ken Livingstone: It is not true. It is antisemitic.

Q216 Mr Jayawardena: Is it antisemitic to say that we need to reopen the Jewish question?

Ken Livingstone: I don't even know what the Jewish question would be.

Mr Jayawardena: It was said by Gerry Downing, one of Labour's—

Ken Livingstone: Gerry Downing used to be in the Labour party. I found him eccentric, to put it mildly.

Q217 Mr Jayawardena: So "eccentric" is as far as we will get.

You defended Naz Shah's endorsement—though she apologised for it—of a post arguing to deport Jews as "over the top" and "rude", but not antisemitic. The legal definition of this practice—denying millions of Israeli Jews their home and deporting them—is, I'm afraid, in my view, ethnic cleansing. How would you describe an endorsement of ethnic cleansing against Jews if not as antisemitic?

Ken Livingstone: Of course ethnic cleansing of Jews would be antisemitic, but that tweet, which shows the little map of Israel in North America, is not about deporting the Jewish community out of Israel. It is just an American academic looking at the economic cost to America of \$2.8 billion a year to support the State of Israel and saying, "We'd be better off if they all lived here." He wasn't antisemitic.

Q218 Mr Jayawardena: You have also stated—as we have heard—that you have never heard anything antisemitic from members of the Labour party, but a few years ago you described the cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi—a man to whom I referred a moment ago, who said that the Holocaust was divine punishment—as "one of the leading progressive voices in the Muslim world". Are you really well qualified to recognise antisemitism when you see it?

Ken Livingstone: On Yusuf al-Qaradawi, I had no knowledge of him at all until—

Mr Jayawardena: And yet you said that he was one of the leading progressive voices in the Muslim world.

Ken Livingstone: Wait—let me tell you what happened. He was coming to do a speech at a conference being held in City Hall in August 2004. That day *The Sun* headline was "The evil has landed". I instructed my staff to find out who Qaradawi was, and they came back and pointed out that he had been granted 13 visas to enter Britain under the Conservative Governments of Thatcher and John Major; there had never been any objection to his coming to Britain. He was a board member of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, of which Prince Charles is the patron. *The Sun* had described him as the "true face of Islam" in the aftermath of 9/11, when he asked Muslims around the world to donate blood to the victims of 9/11. And Special Branch told us that they thought he should come here, because he was the leading Sunni critic of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, so he was a way to reach out to Muslim youth to prevent them being radicalised.



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Q219 **Mr Jayawardena:** But, with respect, isn't the point that you agreed with what he said by saying that he was "one of the leading progressive voices in the Muslim world"? You had the choice to deny—

Ken Livingstone: He was. Let me tell you why he was the leading progressive voice, because in the speech he gave—I gave a speech at the Tate at the time—he said three sentences: "Muslims have no right to punish homosexuals or mistreat them"; "The respectful and honest Muslim man does not beat his wife"; and "Muslims, Christians and Jews are all people of the Book". I believe what I hear someone say, rather than what I read in the papers.

Chair: You are not going down this road. We want one final question from you, Mr Jayawardena, then we have to close.

Q220 **Mr Jayawardena:** Are you concerned that your remarks echo Stalin era propaganda? The Soviet bloc ran an antisemitic propaganda campaign claiming that Zionists were complicit in the holocaust. Does it not worry you that you cite the theories of Lenni Brenner, as you said earlier, and that so do Nick Griffin of the BNP and far-right US Holocaust deniers?

Ken Livingstone: Let us not forget, Stalin ordered his delegates to support the creation of the State of Israel at the UN.

Q221 **Mr Jayawardena:** Are you concerned that your remarks echo that propaganda and that you are aligning yourself with Nick Griffin of the BNP?

Ken Livingstone: No, I am not aligning myself with Nick Griffin. I simply tell the truth; often people do not want to hear it. I should never have come into politics.

Chair: We are at the end of this, thank you.

Ken Livingstone: I am happy to carry on as long as you want.

Chair: Unfortunately, although we would love you to, there is other business that we have to contract. Mr Winnick has two very quick, final questions, then I will close this.

Q222 **Mr Winnick:** Mr Livingstone, do you therefore take the view—we should be absolutely clear in closing—that while virtually everyone else to my knowledge in this country considers that your remarks were totally inaccurate and ridiculous, namely that Hitler was a supporter of Zionism, you stand by those remarks? Yes or no. That is all that is required.

Ken Livingstone: I stand by them.

Q223 **Mr Winnick:** Can you explain, again very briefly, why it is that Members of Parliament from various sides, and certainly Labour MPs, who over a long period of time—perhaps longer than you—have advanced the Palestinian cause, have explained the injustice and humiliations that Palestinians suffer day in, day out, have not been accused by the Jewish community, as far as I am aware, of being antisemitic, but somehow you and you alone seem to be the martyr? Can you explain that?



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Ken Livingstone: I simply point out that if you go to the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, you can pick up this document, which they give out, which shows that exactly what I said is true. It lists Hitler's collaboration with Zionists.

Q224 **Mr Winnick:** I asked you a question just now about the MPs who have advanced the cause of the Palestinians, been consistent, been principled, and have not been accused—as I said, as far as I am aware—by any Jewish organisation, whether the Board of Deputies or anyone else, of being antisemitic. So why are you playing the martyr?

Ken Livingstone: I have no idea. That is the question you should put to those who denounce me.

Mr Winnick: I think the explanation is pretty simple.

Chair: Thank you very much. Mr Livingstone, you very openly came before this Committee to give evidence, and we are very grateful to you for that. I think that the Committee feels you are unconvincing on the issue of antisemitism and that it may be worth your while issuing a more formal statement, because although we accept what you have said to us today, that you wish to apologise to all those who are upset, you seem not to accept the reasons why they are upset. So we are unconvinced on that. If you wish to submit any further evidence, we are very happy to accept it. Thank you very much for coming.

Ken Livingstone: A pleasure.