

Home Affairs Committee

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

Monday 4 July 2016

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

Questions 225–396

Witness

[\[I\]](#): Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader, Labour Party



Examination of witness

Witness: Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP

Q225 **Chair:** I welcome the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, as our witness for today. This is our ongoing inquiry into antisemitism. We are most grateful to you, Mr Corbyn, for coming here. This is the first time that the Leader of the Opposition has given evidence to a Select Committee, as far as we can establish. You have done so very openly, for which we are very grateful. Can I start with the fact that I need to declare an interest? I have known you for 32 years as a colleague and a friend. Obviously, other members of this Committee have also known you to varying degrees in the last years that we have all been in Parliament together.

You have been commended for your work on diversity and racism, but there is a great deal of criticism about the way in which you have handled the issue of antisemitism. Why do you think there is so much criticism by Jewish members of the party, the Jewish community and others about the way that you have distinguished between your incredibly strong record on fighting racism in respect of black people, Asians and others, and your weak record on dealing with the issue of antisemitism?

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you very much for inviting me. I am very pleased to be here and to take part in questions and discussion. I have spent my life, as you correctly say, opposing racism in any form within our society. Since I became leader of the party, it was brought to my attention that there were cases of antisemitic behaviour being reported at Labour party events, or indeed in public, by members of the party. Our compliance unit took appropriate action, and some members of the party were suspended from their membership. In total, less than 20 were suspended, all of which was part of a due process. I became concerned about this, so I asked Shami Chakrabarti to undertake an inquiry, along with David Feldman and Jan Royall, into antisemitism in the party. I promised that would be reporting by the end of June, and it has indeed reported.

Q226 **Chair:** Indeed, and I was present at the press conference when it was launched, and I will refer to the Chakrabarti inquiry in a second. Until you had these matters drawn to your attention, had you come across any antisemitism within the Labour party? It seems that you have acted because these matters have been brought to your attention, which you ought to do as leader of the party, but had you come across this in your very long career in the Labour party?

Jeremy Corbyn: A long time ago, there were sometimes antisemitic remarks made—I'm talking when I first joined the party and later on. Over the past years or so, no, and in my own constituency, never under any circumstances. I was alarmed when I heard these reports. I did obviously receive the reports, and that is why I thought the best thing to do was to set up an inquiry, which also was designed to look at the issue of racism within the party and to propose a due process by which the party should



deal with issues of racism. Shami Chakrabarti's report does exactly that and sets up an appropriate process to deal with these issues. I have to say we are the only political party in Britain that has ever done this, and I think that Shami should be commended for her report and the Labour party should be commended for this, because we're setting up a process that other parties may wish to follow.

Q227 Chair: Yes, indeed. This Committee is on record as being a great fan of Shami Chakrabarti, but this isn't the occasion to honour her; this is the occasion to look at what the Labour party has done and what it has achieved.

Jeremy Corbyn: Absolutely.

Q228 Chair: Now let us look at the immediate reason why this was set up, which is the comments made by Ken Livingstone, who was a witness to this Committee but not a witness to the Chakrabarti inquiry, which the Committee finds puzzling. The Chakrabarti inquiry did not take any evidence from Mr Livingstone, but you have heard what he has said. Do you want to take this opportunity to condemn the words used by Ken Livingstone and distance yourself, as leader of the Labour party, from what Ken Livingstone has said—his reference to Hitler's support for Zionism?

Jeremy Corbyn: Ken Livingstone made remarks that are wholly unacceptable and totally wrong. They were drawn to the attention of the party compliance unit very rapidly. A decision was made within a very few hours to suspend his party membership. He is now—the remarks are now being investigated by the party and due process will take place.

Q229 Chair: So you are happy to condemn—not happy to condemn, but you do condemn what he has said. You don't believe for one moment what he said to this Committee—that the crisis has been stirred up by embittered Blairites.

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I think we have to condemn the way in which he made the remarks and the remarks themselves, and the equation of Hitler and Zionism at the same time. As I said, his case is being investigated. Due process is under way.

Q230 Chair: Jackie Walker, a vice-chair of the Momentum movement, wrote about the "African holocaust" and Jews as "chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade". Why is she in the Labour party while Ken Livingstone has been suspended?

Jeremy Corbyn: Jackie Walker is a woman of black Jamaican heritage and European Jewish heritage, and as I understand it, she became involved in an online discussion about the history of the slave trade and the financing of the slave trade, and unfortunately she then became involved in a discussion about the gradations of horror that go with that. She was indeed suspended. She made strong representations to the compliance unit of the party—I wasn't a party to any of that—and she was



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subsequently reinstated on this. I think she is somebody that does have a deep understanding of issues of racism that have affected her and her family in her life—

Q231 **Chair:** So you are happy to have someone in the party who has made those comments.

Jeremy Corbyn: She has explained herself. I was not present at the meeting when she explained herself, and therefore I was not a party to the decision to reinstate her. I am content that she has now been reinstated in the party and that she will make a positive contribution to our party and not in any way indulge in any activities that would be damaging to the party.

Q232 **Chair:** So has she apologised for the statements that Jews are “chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade”?

Jeremy Corbyn: I don’t know what she said to the compliance unit, so I cannot confirm that one way or the other.

Q233 **Chair:** Those are not comments that you would associate with.

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I certainly wouldn’t make those comments myself, and I think it is an inappropriate way of doing things.

Q234 **Chair:** Let us turn to the Chakrabarti inquiry. You set it up because of the concerns that had been raised. Many regard this inquiry as a whitewash because it does not contain any facts and figures, and it did not take evidence from some of the principal people accused of antisemitism. Why did you think this inquiry was relevant when it really doesn’t come to any conclusions?

Jeremy Corbyn: I did not ask her to subvert herself to the whole party process. What I asked was that she undertake an inquiry into the generality of the allegations that had been made and the way in which the party deals with these allegations and with racism in general. I asked her to look at that process—you will see from the terms of reference of the inquiry that she followed those—and to come up with conclusions that would involve rule changes within the party so that we can deal with this. But she also, crucially, comes up with advice on education and inclusion within the party. I asked her to report within two months, by the end of June. She achieved that, and I think she should be commended for that. We launched the report last Thursday, which was the last day of June.

Q235 **Chair:** But she has not taken any evidence from some of the principal players who led to the establishment of her inquiry. She did not take evidence from Ken Livingstone, for example.

Jeremy Corbyn: She has taken evidence from a very large number of organisations, which are listed on pages 30 and 31 of the report. She also had a very large number of representations made by individuals, which she obviously took on board, and she has taken part in many dozens, if not a hundred, separate meetings with people to form their views. She has



put forward a report that will go to the national executive of our party at its next meeting. I hope the party will accept the report in its entirety, as I do, and I hope they will put forward the very necessary rule changes that will bring a due process to the party if those rule changes are approved by our annual conference in September.

Q236 **Chair:** Indeed. But it was hardly an independent report. The criticisms that have been made—

Jeremy Corbyn: I understand, by the way, that she did take evidence from Ken Livingstone. I wasn't aware because it is not listed because she didn't list the individual evidence that she had taken, but she did take evidence from Ken Livingstone.

Q237 **Chair:** That is very helpful. But she was not an independent figure, was she? Within 40 minutes of her being appointed to be in charge of this inquiry, she joined the Labour party. Certainly at the press conference that I attended she referred to "we in the Labour party", so it is not an independent report. That is why it has been criticised as lacking the degree of independence and robustness that one would expect if somebody from outside the party had conducted it.

Jeremy Corbyn: She was, as you know, director of Liberty for many years. She has a very good reputation both as a human rights lawyer and as director of that organisation, which has defended civil liberties in this country and has spoken up on human rights issues all around the world. She was joined by two other people. I think she has produced a very good report. She has produced the report because I asked her to look at it objectively. I did not at any stage direct her as to how to write it or what to write.

Q238 **Chair:** I didn't say you did, Mr Corbyn. I asked whether she could be regarded as being independent in that she is a member of the Labour party and she conducted the press conference as a Labour party member.

Jeremy Corbyn: She became a member of the Labour party after ceasing to be a director of Liberty. She is obviously a Labour party supporter. She has the best interests of the party at heart and has therefore produced this report. Is she politically independent? No. Is she independent in the sense of how one approaches issues of racism or other things objectively? Yes, I believe she is. I think her own record and her own experience proves that very much.

Q239 **Chair:** Indeed. This Committee knows of her record in respect of other matters and is very happy with it.

Let us deal with what I regard as six tests: the six opportunities that you have had to deal with the issue of antisemitism, in which you have found yourself wanting. The first and the most recent was at that press conference when you made a comparison between the democratically elected Israeli Government and Daesh. The Chief Rabbi described your comments as offensive and alarming, and you were subsequently



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reported to your own party's general secretary by Jewish Human Rights Watch. Would you like to take this opportunity to clear this up and say that you did not mean in any way to compare a democratically elected Government—no matter that it holds a different view to yours—with the criminals who run Daesh/ISIL?

Jeremy Corbyn: At no stage did I make that comparison. I am disappointed that that reference was made by the Chief Rabbi or anybody else. What Shami Chakrabarti—

Q240 **Chair:** You never made that comparison? You never said that in a sentence?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I didn't say that. Can I complete the answer? What Shami Chakrabarti says in her report, and I endorse, is that because somebody is Jewish they should not be expected to have special knowledge of, support for or opposition to the state of Israel and its activities any more than somebody who is a Muslim should be expected to have special knowledge of, support for or condemnation of the Government of, say, Saudi Arabia, Iran or Pakistan. It would be wholly wrong to expect them to do that.

Q241 **Chair:** But you have never made that comparison?

Jeremy Corbyn: I said "Islamic states"—lower case. It would have been better, with hindsight—many things are much better with hindsight, as every one of us around this table is well aware—if I had said "Islamic countries" rather than "states".

Q242 **Chair:** So you did make the comparison but it would have been better if you had not used those words? Miss Chakrabarti, there is no need to nod at the back. Thank you.

Jeremy Corbyn: If I'd used the words "Islamic countries" there would have been no doubt whatsoever. I am disappointed that some people decided to say that I had made an equation. I had not made an equation and I do not.

Q243 **Chair:** So you never said those words?

Jeremy Corbyn: I do not make an equation in that way. As far as I am concerned, the activities of ISIS/ISIL/Daesh are wholly wrong and wholly unacceptable.

Q244 **Chair:** Secondly, at that press conference you failed to intervene when one of your Labour MPs—a Jewish Labour MP, Ruth Smeeth—was accused by a Momentum activist of "working hand in hand" with *The Daily Telegraph*. She left that press conference in tears. Do you wish you had intervened, as leader of the party, to stop that?

Jeremy Corbyn: To be quite honest, I was not aware that she had left at that stage. The remarks made by Marc Wadsworth, which were along the lines that she had been working hand in glove with *The Daily Telegraph*, were inappropriate and wrong. He made another point, which was a



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reasonable one, about concerns over levels of black representation within the party. I answered the points on black representation within the party. Shami absolutely criticised—I totally support what she said—the way in which he had made the other remarks concerning Ruth Smeeth.

Q245 **Chair:** That is very helpful. In 2009 you shared a platform with Hezbollah at an event where you described them and Hamas as your “friends”. Are they still your friends?

Jeremy Corbyn: The language I used at that meeting was actually here in Parliament. It was about encouraging the meeting to go ahead and encouraging there to be a discussion about a peace process in the Middle East.

Q246 **Chair:** I am asking specifically: do you regard them as your friends?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, it was inclusive language I used which, with hindsight, I would rather not have used. The general point I was making—

Q247 **Chair:** So you regret using those words? That they are your “friends”?

Jeremy Corbyn: I regret using those words, of course.

Q248 **Chair:** And they are no longer your friends?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have done so on many occasions. I would also say that, to bring about a peace process anywhere in the world, you have to reach out.

Q249 **Chair:** Yes, we are coming on to the peace process, but specifically they are no longer your friends? Hezbollah and Hamas are no longer your friends?

Jeremy Corbyn: They never were.

Chair: So you regret making that comment?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have already expressed that.

Q250 **Chair:** You have also shared a platform with figures like Raed Salah who was found guilty by a British judge of using the blood libel—a lie that Jews use Christian blood for rituals. You invited him for tea on the Terrace of the House of Commons.

Jeremy Corbyn: He didn’t come.

Q251 **Chair:** He didn’t come?

Jeremy Corbyn: No. He was under house arrest. I met him to discuss the terms of his house arrest.

Q252 **Chair:** But you invited him?

Jeremy Corbyn: He is an Israeli national and I was quite surprised that, if he was seen to be such a dangerous figure within Israel, he had been allowed to travel; he travelled to this country. I met him while he was



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under house arrest and had a very long discussion with him about how to bring about an eventual peace process within the Middle East and about his concerns about Palestinian people living within the borders of the state of Israel. I said to him that I absolutely condemn any form of racism—

Q253 **Chair:** But you wouldn't invite him back to tea at the House of Commons like you did previously?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I don't think so. He is not coming back, either.

Q254 **Chair:** You wrote defending Stephen Sizer, a vicar disciplined by the Church of England for antisemitism, saying he was "under attack" by a pro-Israeli smear campaign. Do you regret those comments?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have met Stephen Sizer on many occasions in his role as a vicar and as somebody that supports Palestinian people and who feels with much justification that their human rights are under attack. These are people living within the Palestinian territories. I was very surprised when that was done to him—

Q255 **Chair:** So do you still support what he does? Would you still support what he says?

Jeremy Corbyn: I supported what he was doing in supporting the Palestinian people. The things that emerged later on I was unaware of at the time.

Q256 **Chair:** Finally, you sponsored a Labour movement conference on Palestine which called for Labour to disaffiliate from its Jewish arm and denounce "the Zionist state as racist". Do you stand by those statements?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I don't believe that to be the case. What I have been involved with all of my life is opposition to racism in any form, and also a very deep desire to see a long-term, durable peace settlement in the Middle East. I have visited pretty well every country in the region. I have met Palestinians in refugee camps. I have met Israeli politicians, some of whom I agree with and some of whom I profoundly disagree with, and vice versa in Palestine. The only way you will ever bring about the process is by meeting people with whom you profoundly disagree, as a way of promoting dialogue.

Q257 **Chair:** Thank you. Let me just be clear for the record. You are saying to this Committee that you did not use these comments at the Chakrabati launch: "Our Jewish friends are no more responsible for the actions of Israel or the Netanyahu Government than our Muslim friends are for those various self-styled Islamic states or organisations."

Jeremy Corbyn: "States or organisations"—those are the words I used. It's in my speech.

Q258 **Chair:** You did use them in the speech? So you did make the comparison?



Jeremy Corbyn: I used the words “Islamic states”, not “State”.

Q259 **Chair:** You did make the comparison, then?

Jeremy Corbyn: I made the comparison, which I just explained to you a moment ago, that Jewish people should no more be expected to be knowledgeable, defensive or critical of the state of Israel than Muslim people should be expected to have an equivalence of knowledge on any Muslim states. The point we are making is that everyone in the Labour party should be treated equally. They have an opinion, or they don't have an opinion. It should not be based on what their ethnicity or their religion is.

Q260 **Chair:** Do you accept that Jewish groups and organisations are fearful, with you as the leader of the Labour party, given what you have said and done—some of which you have regretted today, I think for the first time—that you are fostering a period in the party where antisemitism exists?

Jeremy Corbyn: I think that is deeply unfair and deeply wrong. It's absolutely the last thing I would want to do. What I want is a large, inclusive party. What I want is a party that welcomes all. I want a party that is open for all, where the members, whatever their faith—or lack of faith, if they are humanists—are equally welcome within the party, and that is the way we have to go forward. Many of the Jewish groups within the party—some are critical, some are not critical, but that's what a political party is like and about.

Q261 **Nusrat Ghani:** Mr Corbyn, you said earlier in response to the Chair that antisemitism has existed in the Labour party for some time. Is that correct?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I said that it's been brought to my attention since I became leader. I do not believe there is a high degree of racism within our party—

Q262 **Nusrat Ghani:** No, antisemitism.

Jeremy Corbyn: I want there to be no racism of any sort. Antisemitism, of course, is a racist—

Q263 **Nusrat Ghani:** I don't have a huge amount of time to ask you questions. Can we separate racism and antisemitism? I am just going to talk about antisemitism.

So you weren't aware of comments made previously by members of the Labour party that most people would consider antisemitic? For example, back in 2014, Vicki Kirby said, “Who is the Zionist God? I'm starting to think that it might be Hitler”, and tweeted, “What do you know abt Jews? They've got big noses and support Spurs”. You weren't aware of any of this antisemitic activity?

Jeremy Corbyn: I've said that I was not aware of antisemitic activities in the constituency parties that I have been involved in. The remarks that



you have just reported are utterly disgraceful and totally unacceptable, and indeed within society they are totally wrong and unacceptable. I supported a campaign to prevent the use of antisemitic slogans at football matches, particularly at my own club, Arsenal. I am pleased to say the directors of Arsenal have silenced that completely, and it no longer happens.

Q264 **Nusrat Ghani:** Now that you're aware that it has been taking place for some time, do you still agree with Ken Livingstone and your brother Piers, who believe that antisemitism and all these allegations have arisen since you were elected as leader, or do you accept that it's been taking place for longer than that?

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course I understand it's been taking place for longer than that. The question I was asked was if I had experienced it at a personal, individual level—no. Within the party, on the remarks that were made, I am not sure if the person who made the remarks you reported is a Labour party member or not; I didn't catch the name.

Q265 **Nusrat Ghani:** They are a Labour candidate. We have got comments from Labour councillors as well. They are quite widely available.

Jeremy Corbyn: Okay. Of course they are completely unacceptable.

Q266 **Nusrat Ghani:** How long have you been a member of the Labour party?

Jeremy Corbyn: Me?

Nusrat Ghani: Yes.

Jeremy Corbyn: Since 1965. Sorry, 1966.

Q267 **Nusrat Ghani:** Have you been involved in any activities to stamp out antisemitism within the Labour party?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have been involved in every anti-racist group—

Q268 **Nusrat Ghani:** Antisemitism.

Jeremy Corbyn: I said I have been involved in every anti-racist group within the party—

Nusrat Ghani: Antisemitism.

Jeremy Corbyn: —which includes opposition to antisemitism as well, in any form in which it should arise.

Q269 **Nusrat Ghani:** This report is quite confusing, because on page 1—

Chair: This is the Chakrabarti report?

Nusrat Ghani: Yes, sorry. It has "antisemitism, Islamophobia" right at the top, in the first sentence. I thought this report was just going to be about antisemitism, but it doesn't seem to be; it covers all sorts of racism. In the second paragraph of page 1, it says that the "toxic



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atmosphere...is understandably utilised by its opponents." So I am not sure whether the report is trying to state that antisemitism has just been brought about recently by "opponents".

However, on page 27, one of the first recommendations that the report makes is, "Epithets such as 'Paki', 'Zio' and others should have no place in Labour Party discourse going forward", which makes an assumption that they did have a place in the Labour Party discourse previously.

I just want to understand whether this report identifies antisemitism as being a new thing or something that's been taking place for a while, considering that we have so many comments from people in the Labour party who have made antisemitic remarks.

Jeremy Corbyn: The report is into what it says; the terms of reference are absolutely clearly laid down, and those terms of reference were widely accepted by the national executive—indeed, unanimously, by my recollection. The report looks into these issues and proposes ways of dealing with them.

I would mention the first line. It says, "The Labour Party is not overrun by antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of racism." It goes on to explain that it was the Labour party that initiated anti-racist law in Britain for the first time. All the anti-racist laws in Britain have come from Labour Governments.

Q270 **Nusrat Ghani:** How long did this report take to put together?

Jeremy Corbyn: It was concluded last week and it was initiated about two months before, so two months, basically.

Q271 **Nusrat Ghani:** And I repeat that the first recommendation is that "Epithets such as 'Paki', 'Zio' and others should have no place in Labour Party discourse going forward." The fourth point is that "Labour members should resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israel-Palestine in particular."

I am quite surprised that this report has been written to support you in communicating within the Labour party. It feels like a report that would have been written for some children to understand what is and isn't antisemitic and racist. Did you really need a report to tell you that these words were offensive, and did you really need a report to tell you that comparing "Hitler", "Nazi" and "Holocaust" to Jewish people is inappropriate?

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course I know these words are deeply offensive, and I'm sure everyone in this room knows that they're deeply offensive. I just wanted—and I am pleased that the report includes it—to make it absolutely clear that we would not accept the use of the words "Paki" or "Zio", and that we would not accept this idea of equivalence—the Hitler comparison and other issues like that. We just make it absolutely clear; it is there as a recommendation, which I hope will be accepted by our party.



Q272 **Nusrat Ghani:** Should there be a recommendation, in point 4, that “Labour members should resist the use of Hitler”? Surely it should say, “There is no place in the Labour party” for that. And it is just a recommendation, so if people do use these terms, what will happen to them? Will they have their wrists slapped, or what?

Jeremy Corbyn: What will happen is that they will be told they should not use them.

Q273 **Nusrat Ghani:** But you needed a report, compiled over a period of many weeks, to come to that conclusion?

Jeremy Corbyn: We are the only party that has had the courage to have a report on our own party, our own organisation and our own structures, and recommend rule changes that will prevent any of these things from happening in the future.

Q274 **Nusrat Ghani:** But don’t you think that it’s a sad state of affairs for a political party to come up with a report where the No.1 recommendation is that epithets such as “Paki” and “Zio” have no place in the Labour party? And if you really think these are offensive terms, at the top of page 27, it says, “This Inquiry was triggered by a series of unhappy incidents”. I don’t think racism and antisemitism are “unhappy incidents”.

Jeremy Corbyn: The report is written, with its conclusions, to hopefully be accepted by the party to bring about those rule changes. I think we should be commended as a party for being prepared to look at these things—

Q275 **Chair:** Mr Corbyn, you’ve said that before several times—

Jeremy Corbyn: I know I’ve said it.

Chair: Yes, several times. I am interested in the answer to the question.

Nusrat Ghani: Are those unhappy incidents?

Chair: Order. In answer to Nusrat Ghani’s question—I am interested in this answer—do you think the incidents that have been described are “unhappy”, or do you think it is much more serious than unhappiness?

Jeremy Corbyn: I think it is extremely serious. The word chosen is “unhappy”. I think the important point about the report is the recommendations that come from it.

Q276 **Nusrat Ghani:** Last week, at the launch of the report, whichever way you try to phrase this, you compared Zionism with Daesh and allowed one of your MPs to leave in tears.

Jeremy Corbyn: I’m sorry, but I didn’t compare those things.

Nusrat Ghani: That MP has stated that under your stewardship the Labour party “cannot be a safe space for British Jews”. The report belittles racism and antisemitism, because it describes these incidents as “unhappy incidents”. Was the launch just another one of those unhappy



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incidents, or do you think it has genuinely increased confidence in the Labour party's willingness and ability to represent British Jews?

Jeremy Corbyn: There has been wide acceptance of the report so far. I am glad that it has encouraged a public debate. It has encouraged a debate within the party, as indeed all such reports must do. Was it an "unhappy incident"? I think having the report is a bold step, for which we should be commended.

Q277 **Nusrat Ghani:** In 2011, Paul Flynn, one of your MPs, criticised the appointment of the first Jewish British ambassador to Israel by saying that he had divided loyalties because he had "proclaimed himself to be a Zionist". Last week, you appointed him shadow Secretary of State for Wales. Why did you appoint a man who judges someone's ability to do their job based on their faith to a shadow Cabinet post? How does that show that you are using your position to actively combat the problem of antisemitism?

Jeremy Corbyn: I don't think Paul Flynn is in any way antisemitic or in any way racist. He made those remarks in the context of someone's appointment as an ambassador because of issues that he thought that ambassador had. I do not accept that Paul Flynn is in any form a racist. He is a good man and he represents his area well.

Q278 **Nusrat Ghani:** You said earlier that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of their faith, but it now seems that everyone should be treated equally unless they are of the Jewish faith.

Jeremy Corbyn: Not at all. Everyone should be treated equally, regardless of their faith. Absolutely.

Q279 **Nusrat Ghani:** So Paul Flynn will stay in his position in the shadow Cabinet, even though he has questioned someone's faith and said they had an inability to do their job.

Jeremy Corbyn: I think he questioned their political views, rather than their faith.

Q280 **Nusrat Ghani:** A final question. You have often said that you have to talk to people with whom you profoundly disagree. Have you had any conversations with members of the Israeli Government?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, I have met members of the Israeli Government over the years. I have been in Israel and Palestine on nine different occasions. I have visited the Knesset and met members of many parties there. I would also say that, in the context of political work over the years, I have met people very much on both sides of the equation in Northern Ireland, Colombia and many other places.

Chair: Ms Ghani, in this Committee a final question means the final question, not three other questions after.

Jeremy Corbyn: Is that directed at me?



Chair: No, at Ms Ghani.

Q281 **Nusrat Ghani:** One more. In April you were invited to visit Israel by the leader of Israel's Labour party to help you to "better understand the scourge of anti-Semitism", but you said you were busy with existing commitments. Do you accept that this matter is so serious that you need to prioritise a visit? I urge you to get on a plane, make that journey and make that visit.

Jeremy Corbyn: I have been in Israel nine times.

Q282 **Nusrat Ghani:** What about now, since you were invited in April?

Jeremy Corbyn: I cannot really set out my travel plans here and now.

Q283 **Chair:** Nor would we want you to, because I am sure they would be very detailed. On that point, have you met the Board of Deputies since you became leader?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes.

Q284 **Chair:** On how many occasions?

Jeremy Corbyn: One.

Q285 **Chair:** In respect of the Chakrabarti report, you said in answer to Nusrat Ghani that you hoped it would create a debate, but it wasn't a position paper, it was an inquiry into antisemitism. It was not supposed to create a debate. Surely it was an action report.

Jeremy Corbyn: It is an action report that I hope will create a debate about understanding, inclusion and education, and about forms of education and inclusion in the party. That is clearly part of the recommendations that she has put forward.

Chair: That is very helpful.

Q286 **Victoria Atkins:** "Sad", "shocked" and "insecure". Those are the three words that the president of the Board of Deputies chose when asked in this Committee two weeks ago how he felt when he heard about Mr Livingstone's comments—your friend Ken. There are 300,000 Jewish people in this country. Are you upset that you and your friend have upset them in this way?

Jeremy Corbyn: Ken Livingstone has been suspended from party membership following the remarks that he made, so obviously we have taken action as a party.

Q287 **Victoria Atkins:** You have very clearly said today that you have had problems with words, because you got "Islamic states" and "Islamic State" mixed up on Friday.

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I did not say I had problems with words. I said I had problems with the way in which some journalists chose to interpret what I



said. I felt that if I used the word “countries” rather than “states”, there would have been less confusion.

Q288 **Victoria Atkins:** Alright. I will try to make it as easy as possible for you, because I am going to ask about your actions, as opposed to your words. Stephen Sizer is the vicar banned from the Church of England for six months after suggesting that Israel was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Why did you write a letter of support for him, claiming that Mr Sizer had been victimised because he “dared to speak out against Zionism”?

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Sizer had done a great deal of work on support for human rights for Palestinian people over the years. I absolutely don't agree with him on his ideas of the conspiracy theory. I just thought that his previous work should be recognised.

Q289 **Victoria Atkins:** Another one: Sheikh Raed Salah suggested that Israel carried out the 9/11 attacks. He has been convicted of funding Hamas and has been banned from the United Kingdom, yet you invited him for tea on the House of Commons Terrace.

Jeremy Corbyn: At that time he was not banned from the United Kingdom. He was visiting the United Kingdom. He is a citizen of the state of Israel. He carries an Israeli passport. He came here and, I think, addressed one meeting in the House of Commons, which I did not attend. He was due to come to a subsequent meeting here. In the meantime, he was arrested and put under house arrest, where he was for some months. I took that opportunity to have a long discussion with him, in which I reiterated my views on racism in general, which I explained to Mr Vaz earlier on.

Q290 **Victoria Atkins:** So you went to him for tea, rather than him coming to the House of Commons.

Jeremy Corbyn: He wasn't allowed out, so that was the only way of doing it. He was under house arrest in Ealing.

Q291 **Victoria Atkins:** But you went to visit him for a cup of tea, rather than him coming to the House of Commons.

Jeremy Corbyn: Well, he couldn't leave the house, so that was the only way.

Q292 **Victoria Atkins:** Okay. It is not really where the tea was, but the fact that you proceeded to continue having cups of teas with him.

Jeremy Corbyn: I had a discussion with him about his views on the position of Palestinian people within the state of Israel.

Q293 **Victoria Atkins:** And then Paul Eisen, who describes himself as a Holocaust denier, says, “I question that there ever existed homicidal gas-chambers.” He has suggested that you helped fund his campaigning endeavours. Have you?



Jeremy Corbyn: Paul Eisen founded a group called Deir Yassin Remembered. Deir Yassin was a village that was destroyed during the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. He used to hold an annual event called "Deir Yassin Remembered", and I indeed attended some of those Deir Yassin Remembered events. He actually lives in my constituency. As far as I was concerned, what he was doing about Deir Yassin Remembered was reasonable, and the events were quite large, and a broad range of people came to them. He later produced these views, with which I totally and profoundly disagreed, and I let them know. I have not attended anything else since.

Q294 **Victoria Atkins:** Just remembering that we are talking about actions, not words, last week we had the launch of the report on antisemitism. The Momentum supporter, Mr Wadsworth, offended one of your Members of Parliament so badly that she left the room in tears. You have been caught on camera apparently saying to Mr Wadsworth as you left, "I sent you a text about it." What did the text say?

Jeremy Corbyn: I will explain. Last Monday evening, there was a big demonstration in Parliament Square, which was nothing to do with this report. As I was leaving that event, I was surrounded by a lot of police, who were very helpful actually in getting me away from the event. Marc Wadsworth was trying to get through the police cordon to say something to me. The police decided that they would not let him through the cordon, because they wanted to get me away, so he was not allowed in. I felt quite bad about that, because I did not know what he wanted to say to me—I still do not know; he did not get through the cordon. When I was leaving the event last Thursday, I said to him I was sorry he was not able to speak to me on Monday. He said he wanted to talk to me now, and I said that was not possible. I said, "If you wish to speak to me, get in touch." He has not been in touch.

Q295 **Victoria Atkins:** But this is a man who upset one of your Jewish Labour MPs so much that she left the meeting in tears. That was the same meeting at which you made a mistake about Islamic State.

Jeremy Corbyn: I must say that I was not aware that she had left the meeting.

Q296 **Victoria Atkins:** You didn't see it?

Jeremy Corbyn: No.

Q297 **Victoria Atkins:** How big was this room?

Jeremy Corbyn: It was quite a big conference room with a lot of people. I did not see her leave.

Q298 **Victoria Atkins:** You didn't see her leave.

Jeremy Corbyn: No. I wasn't told she had left until afterwards.

Q299 **Victoria Atkins:** How is that you, as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition,



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have the personal mobile number of this gentleman who has said these things in a national press conference?

Jeremy Corbyn: Marc Wadsworth has been an anti-racist activist for 30 years in London, on many occasions. He has written a number of books about Saklatvala and many other people. He is well known within the Labour movement in London.

Q300 **Victoria Atkins:** So he is a friend of yours.

Jeremy Corbyn: I know him quite well. I have often disagreed with him; sometimes I agree with him. I didn't think the remarks he made were right, appropriate or helpful, and that was exactly what he was told on Thursday.

Q301 **Victoria Atkins:** I am just looking at the evidence across the board. I know other colleagues will have more questions to put to you, but it seems to me very unfortunate that you appear to have so much contact with people who have unpleasant views about Israel and Jewish people. Would you accept that?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I wouldn't accept that. You are going on what a number of media outlets have reported in the past six days, or maybe a bit longer than that. I know a very large number of people in many anti-racist organisations and human rights organisations. I have spent my whole life on these issues.

Q302 **Victoria Atkins:** To clarify, surely you are not suggesting that all these incidents that the Chairman and I have put before you did not happen, are you?

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course not.

Q303 **Victoria Atkins:** No, so let's ease up on blaming the media. All that this is is an observation that you have an unfortunate habit, it seems, of talking to such people in this way—I am not aware that any other leader of a major political party has this sort of history. You are unusual, to put it bluntly.

Jeremy Corbyn: It is very kind of you to say that.

Victoria Atkins: Unique.

Chair: I think Mr Corbyn takes that as a compliment.

Jeremy Corbyn: I take the "unusuality" as a compliment, if I may. Thank you.

Chair: Anyway, we do need to move on. Ms Atkins, a final question.

Q304 **Victoria Atkins:** Going back to the three words that the President of the Board of Deputies used—sad, shocked and insecure—do you think he is going to feel any more reassured after hearing your evidence today, given your admitted contact with these people, who have such unsanitary



views?

Jeremy Corbyn: I had a long meeting with Jonathan Arkush when he came to my office. We had a long discussion about a lot of issues: about the history of Jewish people in this country; and the history of Jewish people in Spain and across Europe. We had a very interesting discussion that lasted a very long time. We got along quite well. I am disappointed he has made those remarks. I am more than happy to meet Mr Arkush to continue that discussion. Look, if we want a strong cohesive society, we oppose antisemitism because it divides us.

Victoria Atkins: You talked about—

Chair: Ms Atkins, we need to move on.

Q305 **Victoria Atkins:** Sorry, Mr Chairman. You talked about how you were disappointed that that was the President's feeling. It seems to me that you are shifting, if I may say so, the burden on to those who feel upset by the comments of various representatives of your party, rather than looking at the root cause itself, which is that some people in the Labour party—not all by any means—have said some rather unpleasant things about Israel and Jewish people in recent years.

Chair: Thank you. Can I have a brief answer to that as we do need to move on?

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Arkush made his comments. I am disappointed he made those comments. I am aware that he welcomed the establishment of the Chakrabarti inquiry, as did many other people. I look forward to his response to Shami Chakrabarti's report.

Q306 **Mr Winnick:** Would you say, Mr Corbyn, that the Labour party has a long history of fighting and combating antisemitism?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, I would, going back to the 1930s and, indeed, before that. I remember discussing the way in which the party stood out against antisemitism, from the rise of antisemitism in Britain, from probably the end of the 19th century onwards. I remember discussions with the late Ian Mikardo and others on these issues. I think we have a very, very clear record on this within the party. The party was very much part of the opposition to the rise of Nazism in Britain in the 1930s.

Q307 **Mr Winnick:** And also very much at the forefront in fighting Mosley and all the poisonous filth that he was spouting at the time. Eighty years ago, the Labour party stood shoulder to shoulder in the places where Jews were under attack. Am I right?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, you are. Mosley was a member of the Labour party, and fortunately later left the party to form the New party, which eventually became the British Union of Fascists. It was the Labour party that stood up with many, many others at Cable Street and many other places. That is the Labour tradition that I know, understand and recognise.



My first job in the trade union movement was in the 1970s working for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, which was itself an offshoot of the Jewish tailors' union. I worked with many older men—older tailors—who had been through the most appalling racism. Indeed, some of them were Holocaust survivors who had come to this country. I learned a great deal from those people of what they went through in their lives. The idea that I would accept any of this is just wrong.

Q308 Mr Winnick: Mr Corbyn, has Labour been a political home for Jews without any form of discrimination because of their racial origin?

Jeremy Corbyn: Interestingly, one of the founding organisations of the Labour party was Poale Zion, along with Christian socialists, the Independent Labour party, trade unions and so on. The origins of the Labour party are extremely interesting. From the very beginning, the party accepted into affiliation a specifically ethnic and religious-based organisation. Indeed, it now has a very wide range of religious and ethnic-based organisations in affiliation to it.

Q309 Mr Winnick: The internal inquiry, which has been much spoken about today, made the point that in the 1945 election there were 28 Jewish MPs. Were you surprised that, of those 28, 26 happened to be Labour, and that there were no Tories or Liberals?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I am not surprised by that at all. The history of the Jewish community in Britain, from the 18th and 19th centuries particularly, is that the Jewish community was very active within the Labour party and movements for social justice. It was, indeed, very radical. There was the Bund—the Jewish workers' organisation—and Jewish people were often in the leadership of many trade unions, both manual working unions and other unions, so I am not surprised. The other one was actually a Communist. I think that, of the 28 in the 1945 Parliament, there was one Conservative, one Communist and the rest were Labour.

Q310 Mr Winnick: In 1966, there were Jewish Tory MPs—they amounted to two.

Be that as it may, there have been a number of questions asked about Palestine. We are not the Foreign Affairs Committee, but inevitably the issue of Palestine has come up. Recognising that there is a Palestinian cause that is not going to go away, which many of us believe is a just cause, do you feel, Mr Corbyn—perhaps you don't feel this; I don't know—that there needs to be a special responsibility, bearing in mind the history of the Jews and the fact that 6 million were murdered not for their religion, which was of no concern to the Nazis, but because of their racial origin? Do you feel that there needs to be a particular sensitivity among certain people who have been mentioned today, who I would consider—I don't want to be misunderstood by people with genuine mental health difficulties—if you like to use the word, loonies: Holocaust deniers who use any form of antisemitism they can think of, including the blood libel



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nonsense and such poison? Do you feel that there needs to be more sensitivity when dealing with the Palestinian cause and the continued occupation of the lands conquered since 1967?

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course there has to be enormous sensitivity. The Jewish people faced the Holocaust. Six million died in the gas chambers because Europe descended into the horrors of the Second World War because there was insufficient opposition to the racism of the Nazis, which was not just in Germany; it was in France, this country and many other countries. Of course there has to be that sensitivity.

In the many events that I have been to over the years, there has often been a significant Jewish presence—at events calling for peace in the Middle East—and a degree of solidarity with Palestinian people during, for example, the bombardment of Gaza. Does that make them anti-Jewish? No. What it does mean is that they recognise that there is an historical issue here, which has to be addressed and dealt with, but antisemitism has no place whatever in that discourse.

Q311 **Mr Winnick:** Would not this be sensible? I do not want to give myself as an example, but if I address any sort of conference dealing with the Palestinian issue and the rest of it, I am very careful to find out who are the organisers. If any remarks are made that are prejudiced against Jews, just as with any such remarks made at a different type of conference—a prejudice against Muslims or, for that matter, Christians—I would walk out, because I would not wish to be associated with those with the most poisonous views, which to some extent, of course, derive from the early Christian Church, and are now unfortunately carried on in so many parts of the Middle East by religious leaders, as you probably know. Do you feel, perhaps on reflection, that that might have been done in your case and would be done in whatever position you might occupy in the future?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have been at events concerning Palestine and at Palestinian conferences when a speaker has raised the issue of, essentially, Holocaust denial and has been asked to be silent—and, indeed, has been asked to leave the conference, or has been removed from it as a result. I think that anyone who is serious about bringing peace to the Middle East or supporting the rights of Palestinian people would not allow themselves to descend into those arguments.

Q312 **Mr Winnick:** Final question. Are you quite clear that in no way were you associating Israel—which in my view, like yours, has many, many defects, to say the least—with the mass murderers of ISIS, who murder simply for the sake of murder? Am I right?

Jeremy Corbyn: Absolutely no connection.

Q313 **Mr Winnick:** No comparison whatever—

Jeremy Corbyn: No comparison, no connection.



Mr Winnick: However critical one can be about Israel.

Jeremy Corbyn: Everyone knows that I have been critical of the state of Israel and its activities—indeed, I believe you have yourself—but of course there is no comparison. I made no such comparison.

Mr Winnick: Thank you.

Q314 **Chair:** You have been to a lot of demonstrations in your time in Parliament and before. Were a demonstration to be organised against antisemitism, would you take part in it and would you be in the leadership?

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course I would support a demonstration against antisemitism, as I would against any other form of racism.

Q315 **Mr Burrowes:** On what basis do you condemn Ken Livingstone's remarks as being wrong and unacceptable?

Jeremy Corbyn: The use of the Hitler comparison on the issues of Zionism in Germany in the 1930s—the historical parallel that he drew.

Q316 **Mr Burrowes:** So on the basis that they are racist and antisemitic.

Jeremy Corbyn: I think it is a wrong comparison to draw, but his remarks are subject to investigation and there is a due process going on within the party. I think we must let that process take place; it is not for me to comment on a process that is going on.

Q317 **Mr Burrowes:** But you have done. You have made a judgment that you have condemned it—

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I made a point about the remarks, and I think we should allow them to be investigated.

Q318 **Mr Burrowes:** You have made a judgment that they are wrong and unacceptable. Should Ken Livingstone—

Jeremy Corbyn: We made a judgment that he should be suspended.

Q319 **Mr Burrowes:** You sign up to the Macpherson definition of racism, don't you?

Jeremy Corbyn: The Macpherson definition of racism is that, in the first instance, the person who feels that a racist remark or incident has taken place against them should have it treated as such for investigation—in this case by the police. That was the fundamentals of the Macpherson recommendations. After that, due process takes over, and that due process would decide whether or not it was a racist incident.

Q320 **Mr Burrowes:** But you know that the Macpherson definition is not simply about criminal proceedings. There has been an acceptance of the judgment of Macpherson and the way we treat racism across institutions.



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Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, indeed. I was in the House, as you were, at the time of Macpherson.

Q321 **Mr Burrowes:** Absolutely. So surely you would agree that Ken Livingstone's comments should be regarded as racist.

Jeremy Corbyn: Listen, Ken Livingstone's remarks are being investigated. The party will investigate them and will come to a decision on it.

Q322 **Mr Burrowes:** So you won't at this stage, despite condemning it and saying it is wrong and unacceptable, tell us that and make it clear, as others have done? Let's look at the list—we've got the Chief Rabbi, the Board of Deputies, the Holocaust Education Trust, the Jewish Labour Movement and many other Jewish people in my constituency and no doubt yours, who regard it as racist. Why don't you agree with them?

Jeremy Corbyn: There is due process taking place on Ken Livingstone. I condemn the remarks that he made. That is why I and others were consulted on this and he was suspended from party membership. Due process is taking place.

The Macpherson report was after the tragedy of Stephen Lawrence and was a very brave report. That report sets out the parameters and ideas on which investigations should take place but, ultimately, a due process would decide. What Macpherson was concerned about was what he saw—and I think he was correct—as institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police Service.

Q323 **Mr Burrowes:** Well, it has wider application, as you know.

The Chakrabarti report made the point that the use of Nazi and Holocaust comparators was wrong. Plainly, even when the report was published, Ruth Smeeth, following the Macpherson definition, would consider that she was a victim of racism at the hands of Marc Wadsworth. Aren't you willing not simply to say that Marc Wadsworth was not right and inappropriate or Ken Livingstone was not right and inappropriate? Surely, you need to go to the heart of the question and say what it is, which is racist and antisemitic. *[Interruption.]* You don't need to look at these post-it notes coming from behind, you can answer the question.

Chair: Order. Can I just say to Mr Rotherham and Ms Chakrabarti that it is not really in order to keep passing notes or whispering to the witness constantly? *[Interruption.]* No, you may not, Mr Rotherham.

Mr Burrowes: He doesn't have to be briefed. You don't need to be prompted to say it as it is, that Ken Livingstone was racist and antisemitic.

Jeremy Corbyn: Look, I have made my views absolutely clear on what Ken Livingstone said—

Mr Burrowes: Okay, you're not willing to say it.



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Jeremy Corbyn: Sorry, can I finish? There is a due process. He is part of that due process that is taking place at the present time in our party. I would suggest that other parties also look at due process for themselves when their members make racist remarks.

Q324 **Mr Burrowes:** I look forward to having other parties before the panel here.

Was Ruth Smeeth a victim of racism?

Jeremy Corbyn: I'm going to talk to Ruth about it. I haven't spoken—

Q325 **Mr Burrowes:** Have you talked to her yet?

Jeremy Corbyn: I've just left a message and I'm speaking to her later.

Q326 **Mr Burrowes:** You've left a message. Have you left a message with Marc Wadsworth about his racist and antisemitic words? You were keen to text him.

Jeremy Corbyn: Can I say that I have had no contact whatsoever with Marc Wadsworth? I will work out what is going to happen now, what process is going to take place.

Q327 **Mr Burrowes:** But on the face of it, it is an antisemitic trope about Jewish and media collusion—do you agree that that is racist and antisemitic?

Jeremy Corbyn: I need to know exactly what was said before I can make a comment on that.

Q328 **Mr Burrowes:** Before you take action, does it have to be a trope, a slur or does it have to be a physical attack? When do you take action as leader of the Labour party?

Jeremy Corbyn: Listen, I have taken a lot of action as leader of the Labour party. We have suspended a number of members because of reports we have received of racist remarks made by them or racist actions that have been taken. They are being investigated. What this report does is set out a process by which those who are suspended will get a fair hearing; those who feel that they have been abused by those individuals will also get their evidence considered. We have taken action that shows a great deal of responsibility by a party. I don't recall any other party, including yours, doing the same.

Q329 **Mr Burrowes:** I'm asking you the questions today. I am happy to ask similar questions of other parties. You are the person to answer these questions.

As leader of the Labour party, are you really taking this issue seriously when you have a senior member of the Labour party, a Front-Bencher—the shadow Leader of the House—saying that allegations of antisemitism in the Labour party “are among the wildest and least accurate of insults”? Do you agree with him that they are among the wildest and least



accurate of insults?

Jeremy Corbyn: I do not know why or in what context he made those remarks. The number of people suspended is not huge. I want to have all those cases investigated. I draw your attention to the first page of Shami Chakrabarti's report in which she says, "The Labour Party is not overrun by antisemitism, Islamophobia or any other forms of racism". She goes on to explain issues of the background of the party and then the details of her inquiry.

Q330 **Mr Burrowes:** So, do you dissociate yourself from him when he said in his email to Labour MPs that antisemitic incidents that have been reported have been created by "malicious, anti-Labour forces"? Do you associate or dissociate yourself from that?

Jeremy Corbyn: I don't agree with that, because some people clearly have suffered and do suffer. That is why we made some suspensions and are having some inquiries.

Q331 **Mr Burrowes:** Is it appropriate that since those remarks, the result was that he was promoted to the Front Bench?

Jeremy Corbyn: It wasn't a result of that; he was promoted as there was a vacancy.

Q332 **Mr Burrowes:** Finally, is it appropriate—in your words, "your honour and pleasure"—to host antisemitic organisations such as Hamas?

Jeremy Corbyn: In the context of that, I have explained many times since it was drawn to my attention—interestingly, some years after it happened—that that was inclusive language used in order to bring people together to promote a dialogue and a peace process.

As I have explained to some of your colleagues, I have met people in many contexts—Northern Ireland, Colombia and many other places—with whom I totally and profoundly disagree. You would probably totally and profoundly disagree with them. You only bring about a peace process if you talk to others. Indeed, former Prime Ministers have met Hamas on many more occasions than I have. Indeed, on one occasion I was with 60 European parliamentarians in Gaza after Operation Cast Lead. We had a long meeting with the Government of Gaza which, as you well know, is Hamas. Does that mean we approve of Hamas? No. Does it mean we want to see an end to the siege and a peace process? Absolutely, yes. That is why we were there. They were from all parties, by the way.

Q333 **Mr Burrowes:** But just to check on your views, do you believe, looking at the charter of Hamas, which you are very familiar with, that it is antisemitic?

Jeremy Corbyn: I don't agree with the charter of Hamas, but I do think you have to have—

Q334 **Mr Burrowes:** Is it antisemitic?



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Jeremy Corbyn: You have to have a dialogue with people that you disagree with.

Mr Burrowes: It is antisemitic, isn't it?

Q335 **Chair:** May I help? This is what the charter says: "The prophet, prayer and peace be upon him, said: 'The time will not come until Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim! there is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him!'" That is in the charter of Hamas.

Jeremy Corbyn: That is completely unacceptable, obviously.

Q336 **Mr Burrowes:** Is it antisemitic?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, it is, but I'd say the Israeli Government on many occasions have, by proximity, met with Hamas, as Hamas has met with them. Is there a space for a peace process in the long run? There are former agents of Mossad and others who say the only way to bring about peace is by discussions with Hamas. Extremes have to come together on both sides.

Chair: Mr Rotheram, I thought it was you who was passing notes. Of course it wasn't, it was Miss Chakrabarti. Miss Chakrabarti, I know you have been a witness here, but you are not today. Mr Corbyn is the leader of the Labour party and he is very capable of answering these questions. We would prefer you not to keep passing him notes.

Q337 **Mr Umunna:** At the launch of the Chakrabarti report, you said, "The Labour Party is built on the values of solidarity, social justice, equality, internationalism and human rights." It is my determination to uphold those values, and no other consideration, that drives my questioning today.

You also said in that speech: "To assume that a Jewish friend or fellow member is wealthy, part of some kind of financial or media conspiracy...is just wrong". In the light of that, I want to clear up the issue of Mr Wadsworth, which has been brought up several times. In front of you, as has been said, he accused our friend and parliamentary colleague, Ruth Smeeth, of "working hand in hand" with *The Daily Telegraph*. As you know, Ruth is Jewish and is also a former deputy director of Hope Not Hate, the anti-racism and anti-extremism campaign. I know you were not chairing that press conference but for the sake of clarity, because I know you have said you feel it has been misreported, why, immediately after Mr Wadsworth made that claim—he was given a mic; I have watched it—didn't you call him out for attacking Ruth Smeeth?

Jeremy Corbyn: Shami was chairing the press conference. She called him out. I answered his point. The second point he made was a legitimate one concerning black representation within the party. I absolutely concur with what Shami Chakrabarti said to him.

Q338 **Mr Umunna:** But do you accept that ordinary Labour party members



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would have wanted, with all those cameras rolling, to see you, as our leader, take a lead in calling him out and taking him on—not waiting for the chair of the press conference, which was a Labour party-organised press conference—for repeating what was a stereotypical slur in relation to Jewish people?

Jeremy Corbyn: He was called out. He is called out. He was wrong.

Q339 **Mr Umunna:** But you did not do so.

Jeremy Corbyn: We did that. It was Shami who was chairing the press conference. I answered the point he made. We have made it very, very clear what our position is.

Mr Umunna: In Shami's report, she talks about people—

Chair: Could you refer to her as Ms Chakrabarti? I know she is a national treasure, but Ms Chakrabarti is her proper name.

Q340 **Mr Umunna:** In Ms Chakrabarti's report, she talks about people employing insensitive, dehumanising and/or abusive language and stereotyping that has the effect of shutting down open discourse in our party. After Ruth took issue with Mr Wadsworth's comments, she was told by some of your supporters in the room, sitting in the first two rows, to shut up and be quiet for taking issue with Mr Wadsworth's comments. Why did you not step in and stop them doing that to her, given that they were seated right in front of you and Ms Chakrabarti?

Jeremy Corbyn: Shami did that, and they were shut up. They should not have made those—

Q341 **Mr Umunna:** But why didn't you do it?

Jeremy Corbyn: Because I was not chairing the press conference.

Q342 **Mr Umunna:** But you are the leader of the Labour party. It was a Labour party-organised press conference.

Jeremy Corbyn: Listen, we made it very, very clear—I have made it very clear here, and we all make it very clear here—that that kind of behaviour is not acceptable.

Q343 **Mr Umunna:** Mr Wadsworth comes up to you on your way out. That was a third opportunity. Why did you not pick up Mr Wadsworth on what he had said to Ruth Smeeth?

Jeremy Corbyn: He wanted to talk to me, and I said, "Get in touch if you want to." He has not been in touch. I explained that he was prevented from speaking to me on Monday by the police—there was no deliberate intention by the police.

Q344 **Mr Umunna:** But you did not see that as an opportunity to pick him up on his comments to Ruth Smeeth.

Jeremy Corbyn: I wanted—



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Q345 **Mr Umunna:** Clearly not. Let me move on.

Mr Wadsworth is a self-proclaimed Momentum activist. In his oral evidence to us, Ken Livingstone said, in relation to the comment by the vice-chair of Momentum, that he thought it was antisemitic to say that Jewish people were important in financing the slave trade because he did not believe that that was true. Do you agree with Mr Livingstone that that statement by the vice-chair of Momentum was antisemitic?

Jeremy Corbyn: You are talking about Jackie Walker.

Mr Umunna: Yes.

Jeremy Corbyn: Jackie Walker's case was investigated, and she—

Q346 **Mr Umunna:** I know. I am just asking whether you think, as Ken Livingstone said to us, that to state that Jewish people were important in financing the slave trade is antisemitic because, as he said, it was not true. Do you think that what she said is antisemitic?

Jeremy Corbyn: True or not, it is the wrong comparison to draw.

Q347 **Mr Umunna:** Do you believe that it is antisemitic or not?

Jeremy Corbyn: I think if you condemn people for their faith and funding of something, yes, that does become antisemitic, because what you are doing then—as I think you would probably agree—is calling them out because of their faith or their ethnicity, rather than the fact of what they were doing, which was apparently funding the slave trade.

Q348 **Mr Umunna:** Okay. Momentum activist David Watson, who is active in Walthamstow and is the fundraising officer of that constituency Labour party, has been suspended pending an investigation into very serious allegedly antisemitic activity on social media. The national spokesperson for Momentum shared a platform with that individual on Saturday afternoon in Walthamstow. Do you think it is appropriate, in the light of the very serious allegations outstanding against Mr Watson, for the national spokesperson of Momentum to be sharing a platform with him?

Jeremy Corbyn: I was not aware that he had.

Q349 **Mr Umunna:** Would you think it appropriate?

Jeremy Corbyn: There is an investigation going on. I think we have to let due process take place.

Q350 **Mr Umunna:** I understand that the report presented to our party's NEC by Baroness Royall into alleged antisemitism at Oxford University found evidence of it among members of that Labour club who were active in Momentum. Do you notice that time and time again in these incidents of activity and offence caused to and against Jewish people, Momentum seems to pop up quite frequently?

Jeremy Corbyn: Momentum members have been mentioned many times this afternoon in many other places. There are many people in Momentum



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of Jewish, Muslim and other faiths. I do not accept that it is in any way racist or antisemitic—quite the opposite. Those people are very active in opposition to racism in any form within our society.

Mr Umunna: I agree with you that there are some—

Jeremy Corbyn: And I am sure you would probably agree with me.

Q351 **Mr Umunna:** I agree with you that there are some good people in Momentum who have the best interests of the Labour party at heart and are horrified by what their fellow Momentum activists have been saying and doing, but there are others in that organisation who quite frankly do not have the party's best interests at heart, and who have a history of campaigning against the Labour party—and still do. Many of them are not even members of our party, yet they seek to influence the affairs and the activities of the party. Indeed, staff at the Welsh Labour party HQ were told last Friday not to go to work because of fears for their safety after Momentum announced a demonstration outside the building. Frankly, Momentum is a party within a party posing as a movement, which is why many of our trade unions refuse to fund it. In order to help with this antisemitism issue, do you not think it would be helpful simply for Momentum to be wound up and shut down?

Jeremy Corbyn: Momentum is a place where many people who have come into political activity for the first time, or returned to political activity, are activating themselves—on housing issues, on transport issues, on wage issues and on many other issues. Surely that degree of engagement in political activity is a good thing. Surely that degree of commitment to social causes is a good thing. Surely, if that brings into the Labour party a whole generation who have been so put off by the politics of the past, that is something that we can welcome and, at the same time, educate people as to how they behave.

Q352 **Mr Umunna:** But there is no reason why they cannot do those things in a Labour party led by Jeremy Corbyn. We do not need a party within a party that often campaigns against the Labour party to do those things.

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Umunna, I thought this was an inquiry about antisemitism.

Chair: Order. It is an inquiry into antisemitism and that question is out of order. This is not a seminar on Momentum or the way in which the Labour party operates. Do you have any more questions on antisemitism?

Q353 **Mr Umunna:** I do have one final one. I should say, Chair, that what I am doing is drawing a direct correlation and line of causation between some of the acts of antisemitism we have seen in the Labour party and the activities of Momentum, in which I accept there are good people, but there are also people who do not have the best interests of the party at heart.



Can I just ask my final question, for the record? I should say that one of the things I have found most insulting about this issue of antisemitism in our party is the suggestion that I or any other Member of Parliament has raised this issue because we are somehow disgruntled careerist Blairites. My family have been victims of prejudice and hatred. My father was beaten up by the police when I was a child. The reason why I raise the issues that I have raised today has absolutely nothing to do with Tony Blair, who ceased to be the leader of the Labour party almost 10 years ago. It has nothing to do with my career—in case people hadn't noticed, I actually am not in the shadow Cabinet. It has everything to do with my concern about us upholding the values in our party. I would appreciate it if you, as our leader, could send a very clear message that every MP who raises these issues should be afforded respect and should also be afforded the benefit of the doubt that what drives us is our concern about our values.

Chair: Thank you. Mr Corbyn, a quick answer.

Jeremy Corbyn: If I may, I draw your attention to the remarks made on these issues by the chair of Momentum, Jon Lansman, who has been very firm about antisemitism. He is a very strongly anti-racist individual. He has made his position very clear. Nobody should be criticised for raising concerns about racism at any time or in any forum—absolutely not.

Chair: Thank you very much. Can I say to colleagues that Mr Corbyn has been here for an hour and a quarter, so we need to make a lot of progress? I am sure we will with Mr Loughton, who will have a succinct question and not ask questions about Momentum.

Jeremy Corbyn: I don't think Mr Loughton is a member of Momentum.

Tim Loughton: I am not, but I could be tempted. I have not tried to join it.

Jeremy Corbyn: It is very open.

Q354 **Tim Loughton:** Conservative Members have to go to a leadership hustings at half-past 5, which is something the Labour party has not yet embarked on.

Can I just come back to Hamas and Hezbollah? You said, "Tomorrow evening it will be my pleasure and my honour to host an event in parliament where our friends from Hezbollah will be speaking. And I've also invited friends from Hamas to come and speak as well." They are not your friends, you have said, so you misspoke.

Jeremy Corbyn: Listen, it was inclusive language I used in order to promote what I hoped was going to be a productive dialogue. I would rather I had not—

Q355 **Tim Loughton:** So you misspoke, okay.



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Jeremy Corbyn: Well, misspoke is what Larry Speakes used to say. I would rather have used other words.

Q356 **Tim Loughton:** Okay. You employ Seumas Milne, don't you?

Jeremy Corbyn: Seumas Milne is director of communications, yes.

Q357 **Tim Loughton:** Is he a friend of Hamas or Hezbollah, do you think?

Jeremy Corbyn: I think you had better ask him that.

Q358 **Tim Loughton:** Well, you employ him—or your party does. You appointed him.

Jeremy Corbyn: He is director of communications—a professional employee. I do not think it is appropriate for me to be asked questions on the views of every single member of staff I employ.

Q359 **Tim Loughton:** Okay, but surely you would want people employed in your office and in the Labour party who do not have embarrassing or offensive views. Surely you must be able to answer on behalf of them.

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Milne works extremely hard on behalf of the Labour party as director of communications dealing with issues.

Q360 **Tim Loughton:** And you are leader of the Labour party.

Jeremy Corbyn: I don't think it is appropriate for me to be quizzed on his individual views. He is a man of immense intellect and a scholar. He has written many books and works extremely hard.

Q361 **Tim Loughton:** I am not interested in how many books he has written or how hard he works. I am sure he is fantastic human being, but when he at a rally praised Hamas for their spirit of resistance and chanted that they would not be broken, do you think that sounds as though he is acting as a friend of Hamas, or did he just misspeak as well?

Jeremy Corbyn: I am unaware of that incident.

Tim Loughton: I have it on video if you would like it.

Jeremy Corbyn: Seumas Milne is director of communications and, as such, works on our behalf to put forward the Labour message, and sometimes deals with—how shall I put it?—erroneous reports that appear in many of our papers and journals of what my views are or are not.

Tim Loughton: Chair, in order to get to the bottom of it, would it be appropriate if I played the video to the Committee where clearly Mr Milne is quoting himself as saying that?

Chair: Mr Loughton, it would not be appropriate to do so but, if you would like me to do so, I will write to Mr Corbyn after this meeting and send him a copy of the video.

Q362 **Tim Loughton:** Let's move on. So you are not prepared to condemn any



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comments that Mr Milne may or may not have made, but we have got him on video. Is Ken Livingstone a friend of yours?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have known Ken Livingstone since 1971, as an extremely active member of the Labour party. I first met him when he was a Lambeth councillor—

Q363 **Tim Loughton:** But is he a friend of yours?

Jeremy Corbyn: Hang on. He went on to become leader of the GLC.

Q364 **Tim Loughton:** I don't want a history of your relationship. I want to know if he is a friend.

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, of course.

Q365 **Tim Loughton:** And is he still a friend, even though he has been suspended?

Jeremy Corbyn: I took part in his suspension from the party. He is under investigation. In those circumstances, it would be wholly inappropriate to be involved.

Q366 **Tim Loughton:** But you are still a friend of his.

Jeremy Corbyn: I am not an enemy of Ken Livingstone; I want Ken Livingstone to mend his ways.

Q367 **Tim Loughton:** But is he still a friend? Because you seem to place quite a lot of store by misusing this word "friend" or otherwise. Would you describe Ken Livingstone now as a friend?

Jeremy Corbyn: Ken Livingstone, as Mr Umunna pointed out during the evidence that Ken Livingstone presented, has done a fantastic amount in London on anti-racism and many other issues.

Q368 **Tim Loughton:** I didn't ask whether he is a fantastic loyalist or how much work he has done. I just asked if he is a friend. You asked for succinct questions, Mr Chairman; it would be quite nice to have succinct answers.

Jeremy Corbyn: Ken Livingstone has been a friend of mine for a very long time. I was very upset and disappointed at the remarks that he made. He was suspended from the party as a result of that. He is under investigation. I think that shows just how seriously we as a party take this issue. I don't recall any other party doing it the same way.

Q369 **Chair:** Order. Mr Corbyn, I think Mr Loughton just wants a simple answer. Is he a friend or not? That's what he wants to know.

Jeremy Corbyn: He has had an answer. Of course Livingstone has been a friend of mine for a very long time, but we suspended him from the party because of the remarks that he made, which are now under investigation.

Tim Loughton: Chair, I really am trying to keep it short and simple.



Chair: I know.

Q370 **Tim Loughton:** The truth is, Mr Corbyn, that when it comes to antisemitism, as we found out when he appeared in front of our Committee—perhaps you have read the transcript—Ken Livingstone is a serial offender. Only now have you found that his remarks are only inappropriate, but you remain a friend—

Jeremy Corbyn: Listen, I disagree with his remarks.

Q371 **Tim Loughton:** Is it the first time that you have disagreed with his remarks?

Jeremy Corbyn: Goodness, I've known Ken for a long time and there has been lots to disagree with.

Q372 **Tim Loughton:** To do with antisemitism.

Jeremy Corbyn: I think that his remarks are wrong. I hope the investigation will deal with that. There is a due process going on.

Q373 **Tim Loughton:** Ken Livingstone says he has never seen or heard antisemitism in the Labour party in more than 40 years of activism, which is almost as much as you. Have you seen or heard any?

Jeremy Corbyn: As I explained to Mr Vaz at the beginning of the evidence session, in my own experience and in my own constituency, absolutely not, ever. Yes, in other places there has been, which was why we set up this inquiry into it. The extent of it is limited, I am pleased to say; I want it eliminated altogether. It surely is the function of a political party that seeks to bring about a cohesive, coherent society that we oppose racism, and antisemitism is a form of racism.

Q374 **Tim Loughton:** A final question. You do seem have a bit of a problem with people who raise the prospect that Labour might have a problem with antisemitism under your leadership, as *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Freedland—certainly not a puppet of the right—did in his column. You said Mr Freedland was “not a good guy at all” and accused him of “utterly disgusting subliminal nastiness”. What did he get wrong in raising the subject of potential antisemitism in the Labour party that led you to write him off in such a harsh way?

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Freedland has on many occasions made remarks that are detrimental to my character, to the extent that he wrote an article about Bernie Sanders and his success or otherwise in New England and somehow or another managed to draw an unfavourable comparison with myself, which seem to me to be stretching things a little bit far, shall we say. He has said that there has been a rise of antisemitism in the party, in general terms, since I became leader. I don't accept that. I am absolutely opposed to antisemitism in any form, as I am opposed to racism in any form within our party.

Chair: Thank you for saying that again; we are most grateful. We have



two more questioners before we conclude. Colleagues may need to go to the hustings to hear their presumptive Conservative leader. Mr McDonald, you don't have to go to the hustings.

Q375 Stuart C. McDonald: No, I do not.

Mr Corbyn, moving away from specific examples, such as Ken Livingstone and other Labour party politicians, there is a genuine area of contention about whether referencing Hitler, Nazism and the Holocaust when criticising the state of Israel is necessarily antisemitic. For example, Professor Feldman, who was a vice-chair of the inquiry, says that such references will be "painful", "wrong and hurtful", but not usually antisemitic. Other respected organisations, though, say that such abuse or criticism really is antisemitic and only works against Jews. Do you come down on one side of that argument or the other?

Jeremy Corbyn: The Pears Institute has conducted serious academic studies into antisemitism and its context, while at the same time not wanting to deny legitimate historical investigation or debate. That debate and that investigation must take place—that is what academics are for and it is what academia is for—but it should never be couched in antisemitism, which would be critical of Jewish people for what they are.

Q376 Stuart C. McDonald: Are you coming down on the side of the view that referencing Hitler, the Holocaust and so on is, yes, absolutely offensive but not antisemitic? Is that what you are saying?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I'm not saying it is not antisemitic. In the report's recommendations, Shami Chakrabarti makes that extremely clear. You obviously have a copy of the report. Under item 4, which has been referred to previously, we say: "Labour members should resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors" in debates about the Israel-Palestine conflict. I think if you look at the Israel-Palestine issue in specific terms, drawing parallels with what happened elsewhere is not helpful—indeed, it is wrong, because the Holocaust was unique in its horror, unique in its violence and unique in its attempt at the obliteration of a whole race of people.

Q377 Stuart C. McDonald: I absolutely agree with you that Ms Chakrabarti's report is absolutely clear that referencing the Holocaust and so on shouldn't be done, but it is not clear on whether the Labour party regards that as antisemitic. In fact, isn't there a fundamental problem with the report in that it shies away from making any attempt at all to define racism or what antisemitism is? I cannot see that kind of definition and I don't see how you can deal with it unless you set out exactly what you expect of people.

Jeremy Corbyn: It might be helpful to tell you that as an interim measure, before the report was undertaken, I prepared and proposed a general anti-racist statement to the Labour party, which was accepted unanimously as a code of conduct, and I am happy to provide a copy of that. It makes the point: "The Labour Party is an anti-racist party,



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committed to combating and campaigning against all forms of racism, including antisemitism and islamophobia. Labour will not tolerate racism in any form inside or outside the party.” It then goes on to say: “It must be a welcoming home for members of all communities, with no place for prejudice.”

I have set the stall out—that was in advance of Shami Chakrabarti’s report— and that was, I am pleased to say, unanimously accepted by our national executive.

Q378 Stuart C. McDonald: Her report states, “I see no need to pursue an age-old and ultimately fruitless debate about the precise parameters of race hate.” Is that not a difficulty though? Do you not have to set out exactly what you regard as racist or antisemitic if you are successfully to deal with this issue?

Jeremy Corbyn: Antisemitism is where you use epithets to criticise people for being Jewish; where you attack Jewish people for what they are. It is completely unacceptable, and I would have thought it was very obvious what antisemitism is, just as much as it will be very obvious what Islamophobia is if you criticise Muslim people for what they are and what they are alleged to believe in, whether they believe in it or not. I think that in the report, Ms Chakrabarti makes it very clear that we have to condemn both of those with great vigour, equally.

Q379 Stuart C. McDonald: Finally, polling has been done that shows that a significant majority of new members and supporters think that antisemitism has been hyped up to damage your party and the leader, and to stifle criticism of Israel. What is your message to folk who have that view? What are you going to do to heal divisions in the party and to build bridges?

Jeremy Corbyn: We have conducted an investigation—a short one, it must be said, over two months. We have proposed rule changes to deal with behaviour within the party and proper process within the party, so that an objective, not a subjective, decision is made on the future of an individual member or what they do. I would say to them, “Also understand that any kind of racist remark of any sort can be deeply, deeply hurtful and drive people away from an organisation.” We are all active in our own parties around this table. We know full well the way in which you need to attract people in, not drive people away.

Q380 James Berry: Mr Corbyn, do you agree that the state of Israel has the right to exist?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes. The state of Israel exists, and of course—

Q381 James Berry: And you agree it has the right to exist?

Jeremy Corbyn: Yes, and all proposals that are put forward, and our party’s policy, are for a two-state solution.

Q382 James Berry: Do you understand why Jewish people find it at best



offensive and at worst downright antisemitic to have to continually justify Israel's right to exist?

Jeremy Corbyn: I am sure they do. There are issues about Israel and its treatment of Palestinian people, and the occupation of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza, and all proposals for a peace process are based around the removal of the settlements and, of course, an end of the siege of Gaza. Listen, I have been there many times, and what is happening is wrong. The killing is wrong.

Q383 **James Berry:** On both sides, presumably?

Jeremy Corbyn: Absolutely, but there isn't a way forward that doesn't involve dialogue—that doesn't involve acceptance of the rights of Palestinian people and recognition of a Palestinian state. That surely has to be the right way forward. Our House of Commons, on a non-binding resolution, did vote to recognise the state of Palestine.

Q384 **James Berry:** Turning to the Labour party, do you agree that it falls to you, as the leader of the party, to set the tone and show leadership on issues like antisemitism?

Jeremy Corbyn: The duties of a leader of a party are, of course, to set out a direction in which you want the party to go and to set out the principles of the kind of society we want to live in. Like you, I am sure, I am appalled at the rise of racism in this country and the rise of hate crime. Indeed, I was addressing a very large gathering about this in my own constituency on Saturday. It is incumbent on all of us to oppose antisemitism and any other form of racism. An attack on a synagogue is actually an attack on all of us.

James Berry: We can agree on that. I have a synagogue in my constituency. We both represent London constituencies—

Jeremy Corbyn: You are not that far away, yes.

James Berry:—and I entirely agree with you, Mr Corbyn.

Jeremy Corbyn: Absolutely, and I think you and I would be in the same place on that.

Q385 **James Berry:** But do you think it is surprising that Jewish people in particular feel uncomfortable as members of the Labour party when one of your own Jewish MPs, Ruth Smeeth, says that, under your leadership, the Labour party is not a safe place for Jews?

Jeremy Corbyn: I don't accept what Ruth has said, and I don't agree with it. We have a very large number of Jewish members of the party. They hold different political views. There is Jews for Justice for Palestinians, which is not a Labour party-specific organisation although some Labour party members are in it. There is the Jewish Socialists' Group and there are many other Jewish groups. The Jewish community is a



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vibrant, often very intellectual community that makes a fantastic contribution to our society.

Q386 James Berry: With respect to Hamas and Hezbollah, I don't want to rake over old coals, but your defence for making the comments you did was essentially that, when trying to build a dialogue in a process, you have to bring people in from the cold who perhaps have views that we don't all agree with. As part of that process, have you ever invited hard-line Israeli settlers into Parliament, for instance, and said that it was your honour and pleasure to welcome them?

Jeremy Corbyn: I have not met Israeli settlers in Parliament. I have met Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and I have met a number of politicians in Israel who hold pretty strong views on expanding the state of Israel, which I wouldn't agree with. As I said at the beginning, there are people who have extremely strong views on both sides of that particular debate, and you only bring about a process when both sides come together.

Mo Mowlam and Tony Blair were criticised for meeting what were effectively representatives of the republicans in Northern Ireland and of the loyalists in Northern Ireland in prison—that was Mo Mowlam rather than Tony Blair. That helped to bring about a peace process. You have to meet people if you are going to bring about a process.

Q387 James Berry: So you would welcome a hard-line Israeli settler to Parliament in the same way you did Hamas and Hezbollah.

Jeremy Corbyn: Listen, I'm not sure they would want to come here, but I think there has to be some discussion with them. I think the Israel Government, as a whole, to some extent recognise they have got to end the settlement policy. Settlements were withdrawn from Gaza. But I do not see how you can do that without widening it out. This inquiry, as I understand it, is about antisemitism in Britain. I am very clear that I will not tolerate antisemitism in my party.

Q388 James Berry: Turning to exactly that point, your May party political broadcast featured a gentleman called Jawad Khan, who was also one of your local council candidates for the Labour party. He said on Twitter: "Anyone else see the similarities between Israel and Nazis?" Do you agree that that kind of comment is totally unacceptable?

Jeremy Corbyn: It is not acceptable at all.

Q389 James Berry: And will you withdraw the party political broadcast that features him?

Jeremy Corbyn: Once it is out it is there, isn't it?

Q390 James Berry: But you dissociate yourself from the broadcast?

Jeremy Corbyn: Obviously.

Q391 James Berry: We have covered the Macpherson definition of racism. You welcomed the Macpherson report at the time.



Jeremy Corbyn: I was in Parliament at the time.

James Berry: Do you think it is a sad day when Jewish people in this country think that there is one rule for them and one rule for other ethnic minorities when it comes to racism?

Jeremy Corbyn: There isn't one rule for them and one rule for others. We have to say, as a society, that we are inclusive of all faiths and all ethnic communities. If we start saying there is a difference between them, we are into a very bad place. That also means that our parties—all of our parties, yours included as well as mine—have to be a welcoming place for all communities. In this report we absolutely condemn antisemitism, but we also make very strong proposals about increased ethnic diversity among our party staff and our political representation and about greater representation for the Afro-Caribbean community. We are facing the issue. I have been in the Labour party all my life. I was there when we were condemned for supporting black sections and black self-representation in the party. That has now become utterly mainstream in every political party.

Q392 **James Berry:** Do you think it is a failing of your leadership of the Labour party when Jewish people think that your party, which is quick to boast its anti-racist credentials, as you just have, has one rule for Jewish people and one rule for people of other ethnic minorities?

Jeremy Corbyn: But it doesn't.

James Berry: I am not saying that it does or it doesn't. What I am asking is, do you think it is a failing of your leadership when Jewish people think that is the case in your party?

Jeremy Corbyn: I am very disappointed that people think that. It is not the case and it never will be the case. We are not tolerating any form of racism within our party.

Q393 **Chair:** The working definition of antisemitism is: "A certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." That is the definition of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Do you accept that definition?

Jeremy Corbyn: I think that is a very helpful basis for it. That is being used as a monitoring point both in Europe and in this country, but I suggest that we need an effective form of monitoring, including self-reporting, of race hate crimes, antisemitic incidents and any other incidents, because there is a serious rise in them at the present time.

Q394 **Chair:** You have given evidence to us for an hour and a half. You have clarified—we are grateful for this—a number of points, including that there was no question of comparing the Israeli Government with Daesh



or ISIL. You have clarified the fact that you do not regard Hamas and Hezbollah as friends of yours anymore. In careers that last so many years, of course people say things and regret them. I know—all of us sitting round this table know—that this happens, but do you feel that there is still work to do in the Labour party, or do you think it is done? Do you think that more work needs to be done on this issue? Even though you have not come across antisemitism in the party in your period as leader or before, do you think there is still work to be done, and you, as the leader of the Labour party, have the authority to make sure that work is done?

Jeremy Corbyn: We are a very big organisation. We have 450,000 members. We have tens of thousands of registered supporters. We have 3 million affiliated trade union members. There is important work to be done on inclusion, on education and on understanding where people come from, how communities have systematically been discriminated against and how history has treated a bad hand to so many people. The work is never done, and I will make sure that we—I hope—accept this report. I hope that we accept the due process that is involved, so that there is an objective way of dealing with antisemitic or racist incidents of any sort, but there is also an education process so that before people go into public life, they understand the diversity of the communities they represent.

Listen, I represent a constituency where there are 70 different languages spoken and there are people of all faiths and none. I am very proud to represent it, and I am very proud to attend events at synagogues, mosques or anywhere else, because that is our duty as public representatives: to represent everybody.

Q395 **Chair:** In answer to Mr Berry, you said you treat members of the party—Jewish members, black members, Asian members, white members—absolutely equally, and you want them to be treated equally, and you would do exactly the same thing if a black MP was treated in the same way that Ruth Smeeth was: you would intervene and you would act on their behalf.

Jeremy Corbyn: Absolutely, they must be treated equally, and absolutely, the party must be made—and it is—an open and welcoming place. I hope there will be a greater diversity of representation at staff level, public level, council level, among MPs and MEPs or whatever, so that we have that real breadth of vision of the community.

Q396 **Chair:** Finally, what is your message to the Jewish community about the state of the Labour party and the way they are treated at the moment?

Jeremy Corbyn: Our party has responded to the concerns that have been put forward, has responded to the reports we have had and has responded to the meetings we have had. We asked three people to undertake an investigation. I am very grateful to them for the investigation they have done. They have pointed us in a good direction—a good direction on bringing about good due process, a good direction on dealing with



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antisemitism, but also a good process on education and inclusion. I want to live in a free-thinking, open, democratic, liberal society that allows everyone to follow their faith if they have a faith to follow. Nobody but nobody should ever be discriminated against by their race, by their colour or by their religion.

Chair: Mr Corbyn, thank you so much for coming here and opening your thoughts and your mind to us on this, and for the way in which you have answered our questions. You are the first Leader of the Opposition to do so, and we are extremely grateful to you. Thank you.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you very much.