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TIMES

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Corbyn slapped down by allies over antisemitism

Labour leader criticised as ruling body rejects his plan to declare Israel racist

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Jeremy Corbyn was humiliated last night after his attempt to add a 500-word caveat to the Labour Party's definition of antisemitism was rejected by his own allies.

The party's ruling body agreed yesterday to adopt in full an international definition of antisemitism written by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in an attempt to end a summer of disputes.

The definition was incorporated into Labour's code of conduct in July, but not all its examples were included.

During the meeting Mr Corbyn proposed a lengthy statement to be published alongside the document, setting out what he believed were the criticisms of Zionism and Israel still allowed by the IHRA. Despite being dominated by the Labour leader's allies, the party's ruling national executive committee (NEC) turned down his proposal, instead deciding to publish a short statement aimed at protecting members' free speech on the issue of Israel and Palestine.

The decision came as the Metropolitan Police said that it would investigate a number of allegations of antisemitism against Labour members as possible hate crimes. The allegations were contained in a Labour Party dossier leaked yesterday.

During the NEC meeting at the party's headquarters in London, where protesters from both sides gathered outside, a series of members told Mr Corbyn that his preferred statement was unacceptable. In particular, concern was raised over a sentence stating: "Nor should it be regarded as antisemitic to describe Israel, its policies or the circumstances around its foundation as racist because of their discriminatory impact, or to support another settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict."

Mr Corbyn did not formally move a vote in support of his proposal because

it was made clear that he did not have majority support. Instead the NEC said in a statement: "We recommend that we adopt the IHRA in full, with all examples. This does not in any way undermine the freedom of expression on Israel or the rights of Palestinians. We re-invite organisations to engage in consultation on the code of conduct."

John Mann, the Labour MP and chairman of the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism, told *The Times*: "What was he thinking of, after all we have gone through, to try and create another almighty row? It would have been turmoil if his proposal had been accepted."

Jennifer Gerber, the director of Labour Friends of Israel, said the proposed statement was "contemptible" and that it was "utterly unsurprising that Jeremy Corbyn prioritised and fought for the right of antisemites to describe the world's only Jewish state as racist in a meeting supposedly about combating antisemitism." She added: "It is now even more clear that Jeremy Corbyn is part of the problem not the solution."

Mr Corbyn's statement spoke of "eradicating the social cancer of antisemitism" and of the "deep concern and pain across our party and movement" at "the loss of confidence in Labour among our country's Jewish communities". He urged the party to adopt the IHRA definition in full with all examples.

When Mr Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party in 2015 many of those on the 41-member NEC were hostile to him, but it is now dominated by his supporters.

The attempt to reach a compromise threatened to leave every side unhappy as MPs and Jewish groups questioned the short statement agreed by the committee. Dame Margaret Hodge, who has been at the centre of the row after accusing Mr Corbyn of being an

"antisemite and a racist" said: "Two steps forward and one step back. Why dilute the welcome adoption in full of the IHRA definition of antisemitism with an unnecessary qualification?"

Karen Pollock, chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said: "The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition and all of its examples should have been accepted in full today, no amendments, no caveats. We all believe in freedom of speech and this framework does not stifle that."

"Why is it that the Labour Party feel that they are different or above anyone else when looking at this issue? Thirty-one countries including the UK government have adopted it."

Marie van der Zyl, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said that the adoption of IHRA and its examples in full was the right decision but "very long overdue". She said it was "regrettable that Labour has wasted a whole summer trying to dictate to Jews what constitutes offence against us". Ms Van der Zyl maintained that "Jeremy Corbyn needs to apologise for past antisemitic comments and affiliations".

Peter Willsman, the hard-left activist re-elected to the NEC on Monday after a leaked recording in which he blamed Jewish "Trump fanatics" for allegations of antisemitism within the party, did not speak in the meeting.

A Labour Party spokeswoman said: "The NEC welcomed Jeremy Corbyn's statement to the meeting about action against antisemitism, solidarity with the Jewish community and protection of Palestinian rights, as an important contribution to the consultation on Labour's code of conduct."

Corbyn zittito dagli alleati sulla questione dell'antisemitismo



Labour dossier 'reveals hate crimes'

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Scotland Yard will investigate a leaked dossier of antisemitism allegations against Labour members after a former senior policeman said that many of them could be hate crimes.

The document has details of 45 members of the party who are accused of antisemitism. It includes allegations that a Labour councillor inflicted "ten years of hell" on a child by calling him a "Jew boy", while another member posted Facebook comments including: "we shall rid the Jews who are a cancer on us all" and "as for the Jews, red see ideal destination no need for gas chambers anyway as gas is so expensive and we need it in England".

The dossier was leaked to the radio station LBC, which showed the documents to Mak Chishty, who until last year was in charge of hate crime at the Metropolitan Police. He said that 17 of the cases could be hate crimes that should be reported to the police.

Cressida Dick, commissioner of the Met, said that her force would investigate the dossier. "Hate crime is something we take very, very seriously," she told LBC. "If somebody makes an allegation to us which contains something like that absolutely we will take it seriously, we will scope it, we will see whether a crime has taken place — in the first instance whether it looks like a crime.

"I, of course, will pass this to my experts to deal with. The law is quite complicated, the bar is actually quite high. It's not just because I'm offended or you're insulted, it's got to be threatening. But they are quite a high bar because freedom of speech is highly valued in this country. But absolutely, if somebody hands us a dossier, we'll look

at it, we'll scope it, we'll see if a crime has been committed."

Simon Johnson, chief executive of the Jewish Leadership Council, accused Jeremy Corbyn of incompetence for not dealing with the cases in the dossier. "If so many of these cases are serious enough to be referred to the police and yet Labour is dragging their heels in dealing with them, then that clearly contributes to the complete lack of confidence that the Jewish community has in the way that Labour is dealing with these at the moment," he said.

"If Jeremy Corbyn was a competent leader of the Labour Party, he would have already dealt with these cases of antisemitism months ago. He would have rid this party of the stain that now affects them."

A Labour spokeswoman said: "The Labour Party has a robust system for investigating complaints of alleged breaches of Labour Party rules by its members. Where someone feels they have been a victim of crime, they should report it to the police in the usual way."

More than two hundred complaints against Mr Corbyn himself alleging breaches of Labour's antisemitism rules have been submitted to party HQ, according to sources. About 50 were submitted in relation to his claim that some "Zionists" who have lived in the UK "all their lives" lack an English sense of irony. None has been investigated, according to a well-placed figure. "They are just sitting in a folder," the source said. However, another source said that the complaints that were made against Mr Corbyn did not meet the threshold for investigation because they did not breach Labour's rules.

A spokesman for the party said: "We don't comment on individual complaints."

Un dossier sui Laburisti 'porta alla luce reati di odio'



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Atonement

The Labour Party has taken a first step towards rebuilding trust with the Jewish community and the country. About time

There was an important victory for anti-racist politics yesterday. After a long, bitter fight that has alienated many British Jews from the left and brought into serious question the character of the leader of the opposition, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Labour Party voted to adopt, in the party's code of conduct, the definition of antisemitism espoused by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. This was a signal that Labour has not abandoned the Jewish community. If it is to rebuild trust, however, there is much more work to do.

The Labour left, led by Jeremy Corbyn, argued that the definition limits free speech. They were most alarmed by clauses relating to Israel. To claim that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour, the definition says, "could, taking into account context", be antisemitic.

Mr Corbyn wanted to add an extra statement to the definition, clarifying that "anti-Zionism is not in itself antisemitic" and that it should not be considered racist to describe Israel, or the "circumstances around its foundation", as racist. He failed. The committee would not endorse such a statement, and it did not need to. The definition is already drafted to leave room for a disputes panel to consider the demands of freedom of speech in debates about the Middle East, and to exercise some judgment about context. Critics of Israel can still speak their minds.

Jewish leaders have long called for the party to endorse the definition. But the community will not easily forget that Mr Corbyn had to be dragged to a position that should have been obvious months ago. If he wants to show that his party's commitment to anti-racism is sincere he should apologise, not just for "hurt caused", but for what he has done and failed to do. He has made antisemitic remarks, suggesting that Jews are an alien force in British society. He has also consistently shared platforms with antisemites and praised them.

The Labour leader needs to start enforcing the rules that his party has so painstakingly and belat-

edly adopted. The backlog of antisemitism allegations against members is huge and so many remain unresolved because there is little political will to resolve them. Yesterday Scotland Yard said that it would investigate a leaked dossier of antisemitism allegations, many of which, in the judgment of one former senior officer, should have been reported to the police as race-hate incidents. "We shall rid the Jews who are a cancer on us all," one Facebook post in the document said.

Labour has already lost one MP to its antisemitism debacle when the long-serving backbencher Frank Field resigned the whip last week. After the miserable spectacle of the elections to Labour's NEC on Monday, more Labour MPs will surely be considering their positions. Peter Willsman, a longstanding ally of Jeremy Corbyn, was elected to the committee even after *The Jewish Chronicle* obtained a recording of his rant at a previous meeting, claiming that allegations of antisemitism had been made up. If Mr Corbyn is to prevent further departures in the run-up to the party conference he will need to show genuine contrition and take action.

This is a time of year when Jews turn their attention to repentance and forgiveness. In two weeks it will be Yom Kippur, a day of atonement and the holiest day of the religious calendar, on which Jews gather in synagogues to reflect about how they have transgressed in the past year, and how to do better in the next.

It will be difficult this year for Mr Corbyn to find a synagogue to welcome him into its congregation for Yom Kippur prayers, but he would do well to enter into the spirit of the holiday. The Labour leader has changed the rules. Now he must change himself and his party.

Espiazione



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