

Statement from Jenny Manson

I understand that Ken Livingstone is accused of being offensive when he publicly defended Naz Shah MP in April 2016. I also understand that he is being accused of being offensive for referring to the Transfer Agreement between the Nazi government and German Zionist Federation in the 1930s.

These actions by Ken were not offensive, nor anti-Semitic in any way, in my view.

I am Jewish and have been a member of the Labour party since 1969. I was Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Hendon North in 1987 and I was a Labour Councillor from 1986 to 1990 on Barnet Council.

I am 68 years old and remain an active Labour member. I am currently a member of Finchley and Golders Green CLP General Committee.

My family has personal knowledge of the violent anti-Semitism in eastern Europe in the twentieth century. My mother came from the Ukraine, which she had to leave in 1919 to escape the pogroms against Jewish people. She lived in Palestine for ten years and then moved to Britain where she settled after marrying Raphael Salaman, a member of a long established Anglo- Jewish family. His mother was prominent in the early Zionist movement in the UK .

In my working life as a Tax Inspector I saw a (very) few instances of anti-Semitism, such as the characterisation of 'Jewish Accountants' as accountants who skated close to the edge. I have never witnessed any instances of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

Anti-Semitism has to be treated as a serious issue, which is entirely separate from the different views people take on Israel and Zionism.

20 March 2017

Statement from Jonathan Rosenhead

I am a Jewish member of the Labour party, who grew up in a thoroughly Zionist family in Liverpool. Along with my many Jewish friends I did not and do not find Ken Livingstone's public defence of Naz Shah MP in April 2016 as in any way offensive, or indeed making as any concession to antisemitism. Nor do I consider Ken Livingstone's comments about the Transfer Agreement between the Nazi regime and European Zionists, though not perhaps expressed as elegantly as they might have been, to be in any way antisemitic or offensive.

Charges of antisemitism need to be assessed against a consensual standard. Antisemitism has been well understood for many generations as to do with hatred of Jews as Jews. The IHRA definition, recently adopted by the UK government, is a seriously flawed attempt to extend the general loathing of the crime of antisemitism to interdict entirely non-racist criticism of Israel. It is deeply unhelpful as a means of combating hostility to Jewish people.

It would be a tragic mistake if the Labour Party were to find Ken Livingstone guilty of conduct prejudicial or detrimental to the Party.

I am an Emeritus Professor of Operational Research at the London School of Economics. My Labour Party involvement extends over many decades, including membership in Sheffield, South Kensington, Hammersmith, and currently in Hackney South and Shoreditch. I have been a GC member in three of these, and was a Labour Party Parliamentary candidate in the 1960's.

Jonathan Rosenhead

14 March 2017

Statement from Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi

I am a 64 year old member of Chingford and Woodford Green Labour Party, brought up in a staunch Labour Jewish household in Manchester.

I have no hesitation in stating that the remarks for which Ken Livingstone has been castigated have caused me no offence whatsoever.

Nor do I regard comments he made in April 2016 in defence of Naz Shah, or in reference to the relationship between Zionist leaders and the Nazi party in the 1930s, as in any way antisemitic.

As someone of 100 percent Jewish heritage, with many like-minded family members, I cannot accept the current enthusiasm for alleging that criticism of Israel and Zionism is directed at Jews.

None of the remarks or actions attributed to Ken Livingstone demonstrate any antisemitic intent or motivation.

I would go further. To allege antisemitism against Ken Livingstone discredits the term. To find him guilty of conduct prejudicial or detrimental to the party on the basis of the charges laid against him would, in my view, bring the party into disrepute among its members and supporters and fair-minded members of the public, especially those from the BAME communities whose cause he has championed over many years.

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi

14 March 2017

Statement by Walter Wolfgang

I am a Jewish member of the Labour Party and was a member of its National Executive Committee from 2006 to 2008. I regard anti-Semitism as an extremely serious issue.

I am 93 years old. I was born in Germany in 1923. My family were persecuted by the Nazis. In 1937, at the age of 13, I left Germany and came to live in Britain. It was the strength of my commitment to Judaism and Jewish ethical values of human equality which caused me to join the Labour Party in 1948.

The Nazis embraced this vile ideology of anti-Semitism and exterminated six million Jews. Allegations of anti-Semitism should be made only when people express hostility to Jewish people because they are Jewish. Such allegations should not be made when this is not the case. It is not anti-Semitic to hold or express views about the government of Israel or about Zionism.

Ken Livingstone has an outstanding record of fighting against racism and anti-Semitism. Labour's National Constitutional Committee hearing into Ken's actions is a travesty. His public defence of Naz Shah MP in April 2016 was not offensive and did not involve him in making any concession to anti-Semitism.

Ken Livingstone's remarks in April 2016 about the Transfer Agreement were broadly correct. Hitler was in favour of Jews leaving Germany for Palestine. The agreements reached between the Nazis and some Zionists are simply indisputable facts.

Advocacy of Jews leaving for Palestine was made by some Jews who were Zionist, some non-Jews who were anti-Semitic, by some non-Jews who were friendly and some who were indifferent to Jews. Anti-Semitism is hostility to Jews because of religion, race or ethnicity. It is nothing else. Many Jews, Zionist and non-Zionist – including myself – disagree with the present policy of the Israeli government.

It is evident that Livingstone is being attacked because he supports the Palestinians, and not because he is either offensive or anti-Semitic. He is not guilty of any conduct detrimental to the Labour Party. His suspension was unjustified. Any further disciplinary action would bring the party into disrepute.

18/3/2017

Statement from Diana Neslen

I am a Jewish member of the Labour party. I am 77 years old and have been a member on and off since the 1980s, possibly the 1970s. I am currently a delegate to Ilford South CLP General Committee.

I have been an active anti racist campaigner for many years, having been among other things the Chair of the Redbridge Race Equality and Community Council.

Personally I am very much aware of the nature of extreme anti-Semitism. My own family has had experience of violent anti-Semitism. My son was attacked by a member of an anti-Semitic party. The offender was jailed for three years. While the offender was in prison we were subjected to anti-Semitic phone calls that included threats from his supporters.

Over the years I have spent a lot of time with people who survived the 1930s/40s crimes of the Nazis and am familiar with the history of 1930s Germany and the Transfer Agreement involving the Nazi government and the Yishuv in Palestine.

I consider it important that charges of anti-Semitism are judged against a clear objective definition of anti-Semitism. I also believe that anti-Semitism must be fought alongside all other forms of racism that are on the rise. The threat is from the resurgent Right, not from activists campaigning for Palestinian rights

It is also important to recognise that support for Israel and being Jewish are not synonymous. There are many non-Jews living in Israel. Many Jews identify completely with Israel, even though they do not live there and feel personally offended when Israel is criticised. However there are many Jews in the world that do not identify with Israel and its governments' policies. There are many non Jews who identify as Zionists and support Israel. In fact there are many anti-Semites who support Israel. It is anti Semitic to treat all Jews as one cohesive group who all support Israel.

In 2013 the Daily Mail used classical dog whistle themes to attack Ed Miliband, the then Jewish Labour leader. The themes were that his father 'hated Britain' was a foreigner and a Marxist. Jews as Jews are often portrayed as foreigners and Marxists, in classical anti-Semitic attacks, the better to distance them from the body politic. The Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council had little or nothing to say about this.

Labour has a responsibility to treat anti-Semitism very seriously and not abuse the meaning of this vile anti-Jewish ideology by misapplying the term to those who support the Palestinians. So Labour's attitude to anti-Semitism should not be determined by organisations within the Jewish community whose loyalty to Israel makes them unable to recognise the difference between angry denunciations of Israel and attacks on Jewish people. Some of these organisations are also hostile to the Labour Party. For example, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews called for Jewish people to vote Conservative in the 2015 General Election.

I do not believe that Ken Livingstone's public defence of Naz Shah MP in April 2016 was offensive or that it involved any concession to anti-Semitism. In fact in spite of her public apology, I do not regard what Naz Shah wrote on her Facebook page as anti Semitic. I also consider that Ken Livingstone's remarks in April 2016 about the 1933 Transfer Agreement were not in any way anti-Semitic. They are based on evidence compiled by Edwin Black in the book The Transfer Agreement.

It would be a mistake if the Labour Party found Ken Livingstone guilty of conduct prejudicial or detrimental to the Party.'

19/3/2017