

## *Proposed Rule Change - Constitutional Amendment*

### **Strengthen the rules against members who engage in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism**

The Labour Party Rule Book 2016 Chapter 2 Membership rules Clause I Conditions of Membership, Section 8 currently makes allowances for the NEC to suspend members of the party who are considered to have acted in a way that is grossly detrimental to the Party.

This section reads (Page 9) reads as follows:

No member of the Party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NEC is prejudicial, or in any act which in the opinion of the NEC is grossly detrimental to the Party. Any dispute as to whether a member is in breach of the provisions of this subclause shall be determined by the NCC in accordance with Chapter 1 Clause IX above and the disciplinary rules and guidelines in Chapter 6 below. Where appropriate the NCC shall have regard to involvement in financial support for the organisation and/ or the activities of any organisation declared ineligible for affiliation to the Party under Chapter 1.II.5 or 3.C above; or to the candidature of the members in opposition to an officially endorsed Labour Party candidate or the support for such candidature. The NCC shall not have regard to the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions.

#### **Amendment**

Add an additional sentence after the first sentence:

‘A member of the Party who uses antisemitic, Islamophobic, racist language, sentiments, stereotypes or actions in public, private, online or offline, as determined by the NEC, shall be deemed to have engaged in conduct prejudicial to the Party.’

Add at the end of the final sentence after “opinions”:

...” except in instances involving antisemitism, Islamophobia or racism”

Insert new paragraph E:

“Where a member is responsible for a hate incident, being defined as something where the victim or anyone else think it was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on disability, race, religion, transgender identity, or sexual orientation, the NEC may have the right to impose the appropriate disciplinary options from the following options: [same as D]”

#### **Supporting argument and rationale**

*Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has called for life bans to be imposed upon Party members who engage in antisemitism. However, the current Labour Party rules do not have clear provisions that make antisemitism, Islamophobia or racism an offense for which a member is automatically expelled from the party.*

*The rules do currently have three clauses which discuss situations in which a member of the party can be automatically excluded if they support another party. This makes it seem that supporting another party, in the eyes of the rulebook, is a much worse offense than racism.*

*The current rules have caused a situation in which antisemites have been able to remain in the party, or re-join after periods of suspension, despite NEC investigations, and stand for office in CLPs. This caused major embarrassment for the party and distracted from our core objective of promoting our policy platform less than two months from crucial elections.*

*The NEC needs more power to be able to act swiftly against antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of racism. The Labour Party needs to be seen to set an example when investigating allegations of racism within its own structures and membership base.*

*The Labour Party (and wider Labour movement) has a long tradition of promoting anti-racism and fighting discrimination. Whilst antisemitism and Islamophobia are different and distinct forms of racism, the rise of both is a worrying trend.*

*Recent murderous attacks on the Jewish community around Europe have created a particular sense of vulnerability amongst European Jews. Against the history of the Holocaust in particular, the increase of antisemitism across Europe from far right, nationalist parties and other diverse sources including on the left and within extreme Islamist groups is a particular concern.*

*Islamophobic incidents in the UK have risen significantly in recent years. There are increased fears among Muslim communities as a result of this and the stigma that they face. Muslim women in particular are concerned about their safety. Metropolitan Police figures released in early 2016 showed that anti-Muslim hate crime in London has almost doubled in two years. Populist nationalist movements in Europe single out Islam and Muslims as targets for vilification and attack. The latest EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey in 2015 found that one in three Muslims respondents faced discrimination & prejudice in the last year and eleven per cent experienced a hate crime.*

*This rule change would make a clear statement that antisemitism, Islamophobia and racism have no place in any political party, or in our communities. This will also be an act of solidarity with our Jewish and Muslim comrades, who are a valued and essential part of our party. This rule change would not prevent people from criticising the actions of the State of Israel, or policies of its elected Government. It would draw a distinction between legitimate discourse and antisemitic rhetoric which is inflammatory, divisive, dangerous and undermines the ability of our party to make a serious contribution to the struggle for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Zionism is no single concept other than the basic expression of the national identity of the Jewish people, a right to which all people are entitled. This rule change would recognise that it is not acceptable to use Zionism as a term of abuse or to substitute the word Zionist for where the word Jew has been commonly used by antisemites, such as alleging Jewish political, financial or media conspiracies and control.*

*It would also give due regard to the Macpherson definition of a racist incident which places particular value upon the perception of the victim/victim group.*

*The purpose of this rule change is give the NEC the power to act immediately when members commit antisemitism, Islamophobia or racism, and make sure that such people are removed from the party where appropriate.*

**Closing date for constitutional amendments: 24 June 2016**