



## **Jewish Labour Movement Democracy Review Submission**

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### **1. Introduction**

The Jewish Labour Movement, formerly Poale Zion, was founded in 1903 as an internationalist socialist Zionist movement. Poale Zion affiliated to the Labour Party in 1920, making us one of the oldest affiliate of our Party after the Fabians, numbering 20,000 members in the first half of the twentieth century. The history of Poale Zion is well documented, with archives based in the British Library, Jewish Museum and the People's History Museum. Poale Zion changed its name in 2003 as part of a modernisation process and was renamed the Jewish Labour Movement.

JLM is proud of the long tradition of Jewish Labour activism. From the Battle of Cable Street, to campaigning on the refugee crisis with Lord Dubs, JLM's 115-year history reflects the strong support the Jewish community has always had for the Labour Party and Labour values. Key members of JLM over the years have included parliamentarians, peers, councillors, leaders of the Jewish community and grassroots activists including Ian Mikardo, Sidney Silverman and Stanley Clinton-Davis. Poale Zion led the Jewish community on women's representation through the Pioneer Women, including being chaired by Leah L'estrage-Malone in 1923.

Today, the Jewish Labour Movement represents nearly 2,500 Jewish members and supporters of the Labour Party, with regional units across the country and a large and active youth and students wing. Despite what has been a tumultuous few years for the Jewish community's relationship with the Labour Party, JLM is working hard to rebuild trust where it is lacking and campaign for Labour across the country, particularly in Jewish areas.

In the past eighteen months, we have trained over 2000 members of the Labour Party in 'Confronting Antisemitism and Engaging Jewish Voters', campaigned hard for Labour's Rule Book to reflect our collective values, and been awarded the Del Singh Memorial Award in 2017 in recognition of what we have achieved.

Within the Jewish community, the role of JLM must also be noted. Within the past year, 50% of the Jewish News' '30under30' were JLM members and supporters, showing that the future of the Jewish community and the future of JLM are intertwined. JLM were nominated for 'Outstanding Group Project' for our Mitzvah Day trip to Calais, and the Jewish Labour councillors lead the way in representing our community. JLM is the democratic and representative voice of Labour voting Jews.



## 2. Consultation

JLM is a democratic Socialist Society. In order to ensure that we fully reflected the views and opinions of our nearly 2,500 members and supporters, JLM has run an online submission. Open for a month, JLM has canvassed views on every element of the Democracy Review, as well as encouraging members to submit as individuals.

JLM has specifically focused this submission on issues directly to our role within the Labour Party. Whilst many of our members and supporters have intersectional identities, and belong to CLPs across the country, Trade Unions and other socialist societies, our submission will focus on JLM as an affiliated socialist society and the day-to-day experiences of Jewish members of the Labour Party.

JLM asked our members the following questions:

1. What would you like the Jewish Labour Movement to say in our official submission to the Labour Party's Democracy Review?
2. JLM is one of 21 Socialist Societies affiliated to the Labour Party. Should the Labour Party continue to allow specialist organisations and societies to be formal affiliates?
3. Socialist Societies currently elect one representative onto the Party's NEC by a ballot of their delegates to Labour Party Conference. Should this continue?
4. Just like the Trade Unions, Socialist Societies have members who may not be a paying member of the Labour Party. Should this be allowed to continue?
5. JLM seeks to represent the views of our members within the structures of the Labour Party, but does not currently organise within the Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic structures of the Party. Should this change?

## 3. Overall themes and key points

There were a few key themes which arched over many of the submissions that were made by JLM members. These were antisemitism within the Labour Party, the disciplinary processes and accessibility for Jewish members to access Labour structures.

### **Antisemitism within the Labour Party and the Disciplinary Processes**

Alleged antisemitism within the Labour Party has been well documented. It is not for JLM, or our membership to be judge or juror, and whilst many comments were made on individual cases, the key point within the responses of our membership was that cases are taking unacceptably long to come to fruition with investigations and hearings. Some previous decisions by the NCC, such as the failure to expel Ken Livingstone, have left many Jewish members lacking in confidence that, should they experience an antisemitic incident, they would not have faith in the Labour Party to deal with it appropriately. Indeed, one of the responses to the review from one member read *"I would like the labour party to look again at the antisemitism in its ranks and to take seriously the problems that this is causing"*, another *"I would like to see stronger sanctions for any Labour Party member, at any level, who expresses antisemitic rhetoric"* and one stating *"Anti Semitism needs to be more robustly tackled in order for the party to move forward."* One member told us *"I want to know that our concerns will be listened to and we will be taken seriously and not be treated as the mockery we currently are"*.



Furthermore, it was reflected amongst many of our younger members that they had fed into the Labour Students Enquiry into Antisemitism, the Royall Report and the Chakrabarti Enquiry but were yet to see results or experience a tangible culture change within the Labour Party, meaning that many of them were no longer engaged in the Labour Party's democratic structures, some not taking up elected positions at their Labour Club.

JLM understands that the disciplinary process is not within the Terms of Reference of the Democracy Review, but nonetheless left obliged to report back the overwhelming view of our membership. We therefore have not included an 'ask' in this section.

### **Accessibility for Jewish members**

Events on the Jewish Sabbath (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) and Jewish festivals often make it hard for Jewish members of the Labour Party to fully engage. Key examples would be Labour Party Conference 2018, which is over Succot (the Festival of Tabernacles), and Women's Conference which is always on a Saturday. Whilst Party Conference dates are set by the Parliamentary schedule, there is much that can be done to make the event accessible. Good examples of best practice include Labour Students and London Young Labour, both of whom have made event Shabbat-friendly for observant activists. However, this is not widely publicised, and many Jewish members feel as if events are not accessible.

An option for Kosher food being missed off the list of dietary requirements for a London Labour dinner (at the time due to take place on March 15<sup>th</sup>) as reported in the Jewish press on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018 featured heavily in the responses of JLM members. JLM are happy to work with the Labour Party to support and advise as to how to make events accessible, as we have done with Labour Students.

**ASK – for the Labour Party to fully consider how to make events accessible for observant Jewish members, through Shabbat and Jewish festival friendly events and kosher catering.**

### **4. The role and structure of socialist societies**

The Jewish Labour Movement has been affiliated to the Labour Party since 1920 and is incredibly proud of our role in shaping the Labour Party over nearly a century. Our members clearly believe that we have a unique role within the Labour Party and are keen to see this continued. From running campaigns to support the Dubs Amendment, to organising in General Elections and by-elections, the Jewish Labour Movement has contributed a huge amount to the history of the Party, and our members believe we should do so in the future.

One member said in response to our question on socialist societies that "*We are the lifeblood of the party and bring with our affiliation a formal structure of accountability and debate within*". Our Review Submission is clear that JLM represents the overwhelming majority of left-leaning Jews in the UK, and the historic links to our community's representative organisations such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews are valued and important.

JLM members believe that the organised structure of Socialist Societies should not change, but that the Socialist Societies should be harnessed more to improve Labour's relationships with faith communities and liberation groups. The intersectional nature of Jewish identity also



featured in responses, meaning that many of our members are actively involved in multiple socialist societies, and the close relationship between many socialist societies was highlighted.

**ASK – for the Democracy Review to respect the role of self-organising socialist societies, and to use them to reach under-represented or marginalised groups on behalf of the Labour Party. Any attempt to dilute or remove JLM’s historic affiliation would be viewed as a direct affront to the Jewish community.**

## **5. NEC Representation**

The Socialist Societies representation on the NEC is clearly exceptionally important to JLM members. Collectively, Socialist Societies represent some of the most marginalised voices within the Labour Party, and having direct representation is the most powerful form of combatting any form of oppression.

The Labour Party, since its inception, has always been a coalition of members, Trade Unions and affiliates. Collectively, all parts of the Labour movement and their diversity is reflected in our structures and decision-making process. Going forward, any increases in the number of NEC spaces to reflect the diversity of membership should be matched proportionally with increases to reflect the diversity of affiliates, including Trade Unions and Socialist Societies such as JLM.

However, our members made it clear that the role of Socialist Societies, and our representation on the NEC should only be if *“if membership exceeds a reasonable number”*. The Jewish Labour Movement’s members amass around 1% of the Jewish community in the UK according to numbers taken from the 2011 census. JLM believe this to be a remarkable achievement, considering the growing birth rate within the Jewish community, and a testament to the politically active history of Poale Zion and JLM.

**ASK – for the Democracy Review to consider expanding the number of NEC spaces for socialist societies from one to two, in line with representation of Trade Unions.**

## **6. Affiliate Membership**

It is no secret that the past few years have been immensely challenging for the historic relationship between the Jewish community and the Labour Party. An independent poll run by the Jewish Chronicle, the largest Jewish newspaper in the UK estimated that a century old relationship had dwindled to 8.5% of the vote in December 2016. This increased marginally to 13% in June 2017 before the General Election, but the electoral impact was clear. In Finchley and Golders Green, the largest Jewish constituency in the UK with 21% of the population identifying as Jewish (according to the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in 2015), the swing to Labour was only 4.5%, compared with a 10.9% swing in the rest of London. The failure to win Finchley and Golders Green was replicated in Hendon, Chipping Barnet and Harrow East, now collectively known as the Bagel Belt.

Many JLM members see the Movement as a ‘halfway-house’. They feel unable to be a member of the Labour Party during the current issues but remain bound to our shared values and common interests. For many of our members, their faith has led them to the Labour Party, and they wholeheartedly want to engage with our democratic structures the best way they can. As one of our members commented in their submission, *“there are many roads to socialism.”*



The clear conclusion from JLM's online submission is that Socialist Societies such as JLM should be allowed members who are not members of the Labour Party on the same provision that JLM holds, one cannot be a member of another political party. We cannot hope to win the Jewish community back to the Labour Party without JLM as an independent and democratic organisation within the Labour movement.

**ASK – for the Democracy Review to maintain the autonomous principle of self-organising, if affiliates are compliant with Labour Party rules, especially regarding affiliate membership**

## **7. BAME Labour**

Taken on its most simple genetic basis, Jews are an ethnic minority in the United Kingdom, and therefore many JLM members do define as BAME Labour, including many of JLM's leadership. This was nicely summed up by one response by a member who stated, *"If the Jews aren't classified as an ethnic minority then the term doesn't have any meaning."*

However, this was clearly the most divisive question put to our membership. Many commented that they had been made to feel uncomfortable within BAME spaces including one member saying, *"I have a fairly good idea of what they [other ethnic minority groups within Labour] think of Jews and it is not pleasant."*

The history of Jews in the UK is a complex and varied one; Jews are not a homogenous ethnic group. Historically, the Jewish community was Sephardi and Mizrahi, Jews of Spanish, Portuguese and Middle Eastern heritage. Migration from Eastern Europe begun in earnest in the 1880s and continued through until after the Holocaust. Some Jews define as BAME based off their family heritage and some do not.

Our members who are involved in BAME Labour structures wish this to continue along the principle of self-definition.

**ASK – the principle of self-organising must be applied across all BAME communities and the collective voice of BAME Labour members should operate on this basis also**

## **8. Conclusion**

The Jewish community is not homogenous; every walk of life, political opinion and religious observance can be found within it. The Jewish Labour Movement does our best to reflect the range of views of our broad membership. The Democracy Review is an important tool in ensuring that our Party represents our mass-membership. JLM has been affiliated to the Labour Party for 98 years. Within the affiliates of the Labour Party, we are equivalent in affiliation to some of the small and bespoke Trade Unions, and represent the overwhelming majority of Jewish Labour members and supporters in the UK.

Self-organising is the most powerful tool for minority or under-represented groups, and that has contributed to much of the success of the Jewish Labour Movement. We hope that this remains the case.

**Asks**



1. For the Labour Party to fully consider how to make events accessible for observant Jewish members, through Shabbat and Jewish festival friendly events and kosher catering.
2. For the Democracy Review to respect the role of self-organising socialist societies, and to use them to reach under-represented or marginalised groups on behalf of the Labour Party. Any attempt to dilute or remove JLM's historic affiliation would be viewed as a direct affront to the Jewish community.
3. For the Democracy Review to consider expanding the number of NEC spaces for socialist societies from one to two, in line with representation of Trade Unions.
4. For the Democracy Review to maintain the autonomous principle of self-organising, if affiliates are compliant with Labour Party rules, especially regarding affiliate membership
5. The principle of self-organising must be applied across all BAME communities and the collective voice of BAME Labour members should operate on this basis also

### **Appendix - Examples of individual submissions made to JLM**

Cllr Jane Black, Chair of JLM North West and Mayor of Bury 2018

*"The Jewish Labour Movement is an affiliate to the Labour Party and is as old as the party itself. Many Jewish working-class people when they arrived in this country, like my family, joined the Labour and trade union movement and helped to make them what they are today. Across the country Jewish people became involved, as councillors, MPs and across civic life.*

*The JLM is a democratic organisation that debates and forms policy on behalf of members. In the last few years its membership has grown considerably, and new regional groupings have been established around the country, like the one in the North West which I chair. JLM has played an important role within the Labour Party and wider, within the Jewish community. We organise events at Labour Party Conference, in Westminster and at regional conferences. We have delivered training on Confronting Antisemitism and Engaging Jewish voters, developed in partnership with the Party. Young members play an active role at all levels.*

*JLM has recently been under attack, from some within the Jewish community and also others. As part of this Democracy Review, looking at the Socialist Societies, it stands out as an organization that has remained up to date, refreshed its remit and its membership, and which is playing an important role within the party. During the General Election JLM members up and down the country campaigned and canvassed for parliamentary candidates. We are continuing to do this now in my area for vulnerable council seats, in areas of Greater Manchester with strong Jewish communities, with whom, the Labour Party has become a toxic brand.*

*Support for Labour is dwindling, and I despair at the idea that, at a time when Labour could be moving towards Government, many longstanding Jewish supporters are turning away from the Labour party, which should be our natural home. We need to be part of that journey.*

*Strong Socialist Societies like the JLM provide an example of how the affiliated organisations can be renewed and move forward in the Labour Party today."*

Steven Lapsley, 2018 Council Candidate in Chellaston and Shelton Lock and senior JLM activist





*"The Jewish Labour Movement, under its former name of Paole Zion, affiliated to the Labour Party in 1920 – we are looking forward to celebrating the centenary of this successful and important partnership in two years time.*

*Jewish people were prominent in the formation of The Labour Party, and have remained active in the party, in trade unions and throughout the movement ever since. The Labour Party has also been prominent and vital in the life of the Jewish community in Britain. In 1920, Jewish people were often seen as outsiders and foreigners and were discriminated against throughout society. The Labour Party played a vital role in promoting equality and justice for Jewish communities, and did so because they had stood side-by-side with these communities on picket lines, on marches and on demonstrations in the fight against the reactionary and unfair Tory Government.*

*The Labour Party and the Jewish Labour Movement still share these values. The JLM campaigned across Britain during the General Election in 2017, and are doing so again during this year's Local Elections. It is a democratic organisation which remains proud of its long-term association with the party, both at its birth and as we move towards government in 2018 – and this association remains vital. With Jewish people once again under attack throughout the world, an organisation which promotes the ideals and values of the vast majority of left-wing British Jews cannot be seen to be attacked by its own comrades. I believe that the Labour Party remains the natural home for British Jews, and through our Socialist Society we have proudly added to the tradition of the Labour Movement."*

Daniel Katz, Leeds Labour Club, JLM and student activist

*"The Jewish Labour Movement is a vital organisation for Jews to self-identify within the Labour Party, as well as to convey labour messages to the Jewish community and vice versa. Particularly for young activists, it is a vital bridge facilitating involvement in Labour circles, and to feel comfortable within the Labour Party. Many young Jews, bearing the brunt of the housing crisis and austerity, want to passionately get involved in creating a better society, but have well-founded reservations about the current state of the Labour Party with regards to the Jewish community.*

*The JLM, therefore, serves as a bastion of tolerance where members can organise and vocalise their concerns, and to start to get involved in the wider party. The JLM has a long and proud legacy, and has been revitalised since 2015, providing an active support network for young activists and leading the fight to make the Labour Party fully tolerant, and to bring a Labour government. As a Socialist Society, bearing nearly a century of affiliation to the Labour Party, it is therefore essential that JLM can continue its vital role within the Labour Party."*