



c/o Finchley and Golders Green Labour Party, 38 Church Lane, London, N2 8DT

Rt Hon Nick Brown MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

7 June 2019

Dear Nick

I am writing following the election of Lisa Forbes MP in the Peterborough by-election yesterday.

As you will be aware, during the campaign it became clear that Ms Forbes endorsed antisemitic material online and that she signed a letter last year that was aimed at persuading NEC members not to adopt the internationally accepted IHRA definition of antisemitism.

Ms Forbes apology and statement response made it clear that she regretted endorsing material online in an 'accidental' manner but said nothing about the position she took last year, or indeed, currently takes on IHRA.

This is crucial. Last summer, the Party leadership demonstrated yet again its abject failure to take action on anti-Jewish racism and its complete indifference to the views of the Jewish community (including nearly 70 religious community leaders) when it resisted the NEC's adoption of IHRA. Indeed, the PLP itself accepted the definition at a meeting on 16 July 2018 and urged the NEC to do likewise.

Ms Forbes clearly felt that Jews should not be permitted to define their own oppression (contrary to Macpherson's principles) and that the Party was right to abandon its anti-racist credentials by rejecting a definition which had been adopted at all levels of government in Britain.

Given the PLP's adoption of IHRA, these views are surely incompatible with those of someone holding the Labour whip. Other MPs, AMs and councillors have had the whip suspended from them for similar behaviour and expressing similar views. Therefore, the whip should be suspended from Ms Forbes.

Failure to do so will be taken by the Jewish community as yet another sign that Labour tolerates and encourages a culture of anti-Jewish racism in the Party and is absolutely unprepared to take any concrete action whatsoever to deal with it. After all Ms Forbes has not only been able to hold these views and stay in membership but has gained political advancement and won elected office, despite them.

Also, in her public statements on the matter, Ms Forbes says she would reach out to the Jewish community. I note that she has failed to make any contact with JLM, the Party's sole affiliate for Jewish members and supporters. That hardly speaks well of her good faith in these matters.

It is worth noting that, when JLM met with Jenny Formby shortly after she took up post, one of the nineteen actions we put to her was that it should be a clear expectation of parliamentary candidates to support IHRA. This, like all our suggestions, was ignored.

The Jewish Labour Movement represents over 2000 Labour supporting members of the Jewish community and has been affiliated to the Labour Party since 1920.



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We regard Ms Forbes's actions as symptomatic of the Party's institutional racism. A culture has developed, and been encouraged, which tolerates anti-Jewish hate and in which, if one wishes to advance politically, it is advantageous to say and endorse racist statements. That is why we say the Party's problem is institutional, and why we have referred the Party to the EHRC.

Sadly, this is the third time in recent weeks that I have written or copied to you correspondence about the behaviour of Labour MPs (previously with regard to Richard Burgon MP and Ruth George MP). It is disappointing that I have not received a reply on either occasion; it sends a strong signal to my members and the wider community how much the Party cares about tackling Labour's institutionalised anti-Jewish racism.

I am copying John Cryer MP for his information as PLP chair. As is our usual practice, I will make this letter publicly available.

Yours sincerely

Mike Katz
National Chair, Jewish Labour Movement

cc John Cryer MP



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