

Thank you to JLM for inviting me to contribute to your deliberations about nominations for the current Labour leadership contest.

I hope I'll have the opportunity to be on the final ballot to ensure we have the broadest debate possible, and so I can bring my experience on fighting anti-Semitism and tackling complex international issues into that debate.

When I went to our conference in Liverpool in 2018, the party's anti-Semitism crisis was at one of its many highs (more rightly described as lows), following the bitter struggle I helped lead in Shadow Cabinet for our party to accept the IHRA definition and its examples in full.

I expected the issue to dominate debate at conference, but by the time I was due to make my speech on Tuesday afternoon – the penultimate session of the whole event – I was told that not a single Labour front-bencher had so far raised the issue from the conference stage.

I had always intended to speak out on anti-Semitism, but it felt more important than ever given the apparent silence of others.

When I came into the conference hall for the foreign affairs session, delegates were debating the situation in Israel and Palestine, and as speakers took turns to denounce Israel, the members in the hall waved a sea of Palestinian flags.

My draft speech had already been released to the media, but a senior reporter from the BBC said to one of my advisers at the side of the hall: "Surely she can't say all this stuff now. She'll get booed off the stage."

But not only do I never back down, I have a fundamental disagreement with the notion that you cannot simultaneously support justice for Palestine, a two-state solution, and oppose the policies of the Netanyahu government that are making that harder to achieve, while also fighting furiously against anti-Semitism in our party.

So I made my speech as drafted, and I made that argument. I talked about Labour's proud history of standing up to fascism, and I said that the despicable individuals who were using Labour's support for Palestine as a cloak and a cover for their horrific anti-Semitism should be kicked out of our party the way Oswald Mosley was kicked out of Liverpool in 1937.

And when I say kicked out, I don't mean being sent for education sessions or undergoing short-term suspensions or receiving warnings. Just kick them out immediately, and tell them they're not welcome in our party or on any future party platform.

Now clearly, I recognise that is the bare minimum we need to do when it comes to tackling this crisis. We also need to go through the 19-point plan from the JLM, the 10 Board of Deputies pledges, and imminently the findings of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission about how this crisis has been handled in the past and how it must be handled in the future, with the starting point that every single recommendation is implemented unless we can rationally agree with you and others why not.

And yes, as well as transparency and independence in our disciplinary processes, there is clearly a role for education of our members, activists and candidates too, because I meet too many across the country who say they just don't understand why this is an issue, that they've not seen or heard any anti-Semitism, and think the whole thing is a media fiction.

For people who tell me that, I carry around an email I was sent, after I spoke about the bitter struggle I faced to get Jeremy Corbyn's team to make sure the condemnation of rocket and terror attacks from Palestinian terror groups that was in our 2017 manifesto was retained in the version for 2019.

The email said, and excuse me in advance for the bad and vile language:

*"Why should Corbyn make a reference to Palestinian rockets you fucking Zionist whore...Yids and their supporters want a licence to "kill and steal" without any criticism...They need to be "culled" again. They are fucking animals and you can't reason with them. It's in their money-grabbing blood."*

Sometimes the reaction I get is shock. Sometimes it's more defensive, arguing that it's just one person, and we don't even know if they're a Labour member. But I explain that – extreme as this one is – I get emails and Tweets sent to me every single day, simply for being willing to speak out publicly and unequivocally against anti-Semitism.

But that is what we need from Labour's new leader: calling this evil out whenever we see it, and leading from the front in taking it on, whether it's reporting so-called Labour members who've repeated anti-Semitic tropes, or supporting people standing up against prejudice when the online hate mobs turn on them.

Ultimately, we have a long, hard road ahead to rebuild trust with the Jewish community. We need to start by apologising to our Jewish brothers and sisters for the hurt and fear that they've been caused by people who call themselves part of the Labour movement but betray our party's values and history with their every insidious remark.

And we then need to sit down with representatives of the Jewish community and start to rebuild the bridges that should never have been torn down. The JLM will play a crucial role in that, but you and our party will need a leader who will make it a top priority, and who will be willing to accept and apologise for the terrible mistakes we have made.

That will take a leader of principle, strength and courage, but as I demonstrated in Liverpool in 2018, I am that kind of leader. So please consider nominating me, to ensure that not just I – but all these issues – are clearly on the ballot.