

The Campaign to Stop Corbyn - Smears, Racism and Censorship

By [Media Lens](#)

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& [Civil Rights](#)

The greatest fear of those holding the most power and wealth is that they will lose their exalted position in the world. They will resist any changes to the grossly unequal and unjust class structure that causes grievous damage to so many people; and to the planet itself. Even the threat of real change must be crushed. This, in a nutshell, underpins the astonishing and relentless campaign to stop Jeremy Corbyn, a moderate leftist, from ever becoming Prime Minister.

On July 10, BBC broadcast an episode of Panorama that purported to be an impartial investigation into the loaded question, '[Is Labour Anti-Semitic?](#)'. It quickly became clear that the programme makers were not interested in a serious appraisal of the evidence and that the question was merely rhetorical. The thrust of the programme was that Labour *is* anti-semitic. The Labour Party [response](#) was scathing:

'The Panorama programme was not a fair or balanced investigation. It was a seriously inaccurate, politically one-sided polemic, which breached basic journalistic standards, invented quotes and edited emails to change their meaning. It was an overtly biased intervention by the BBC in party political controversy.

'An honest investigation into antisemitism in Labour and wider society is in the public interest. The Panorama team instead pre-determined an answer to the question posed by the programme's title.'

The programme was presented by BBC journalist John Ware who had previously made clear his antagonism towards Corbyn's politics. As journalist Jonathan Cook [wrote](#):

'that Panorama made no attempt at even-handedness or fairness in its programme on Labour should have come as no surprise. The man in charge of the investigation was John Ware, a former Sun journalist. He cannot be considered dispassionate either about Corbyn or the prospects of Labour defeating the Conservative Party at a general election, which may be just around the corner.'

Cook continued:

'Two years ago, Ware wrote a lengthy article for a right-wing magazine warning of the danger of Corbyn reaching power. He was a politician, [wrote](#) Ware, "whose entire political career has been stimulated by disdain for the

West, appeasement of extremism, and who would barely understand what fighting for the revival of British values is really all about”.

‘Shortly after Corbyn’s leadership election victory in 2015, Ware [headed](#) a Panorama documentary that sought to malign the new leader. Ware is also a strident supporter of Israel and of its state ideology, Zionism. In a 2005 edition of Panorama he [suggested](#) that Muslims in Britain who spoke out about Israel’s crimes against Palestinians were “extremists”.

‘In an article in the Jewish Chronicle last year Ware [concluded](#) that anti-Zionism had “morphed into antisemitism – itself a Corbyn legacy”.’

The Panorama programme was immediately followed by BBC News at Ten which gave it extensive coverage, pumping up the propaganda value of the fake ‘investigation’. BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg [intoned](#) gravely:

‘Many party members have left, and if Labour can’t get a grip of racism in its own ranks, what might they lose next?’

Consider her choice of words: ‘Many party members have left’ and ‘Labour can’t get a grip of racism in its own ranks’. The public is supposed to swallow the BBC’s implication of endemic Labour anti-semitism as impartial, objective reporting.

Kuenssberg continued:

‘This is a problem that has dogged the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, not for a few weeks, not just for a few months, but for several years now.’

Many commentators, including Media Lens, have long argued that the issue of anti-semitism has been exploited to inflict as much damage on Corbyn as possible. But that rational perspective is systematically excluded from BBC News ‘journalism’. Instead, as ever, the BBC political editor continued to hammer home the requisite propaganda bullet points:

‘Corbyn has been unable, it seems, to crack down on it [anti-semitism] in the way he has promised to do, again and again.’

In the BBC version of ‘neutral’ news reporting, there is no hint that Corbyn’s opponents – not least the corporate media, including the BBC – wish to destroy him and what he stands for. But then, from the very beginning, the BBC has been on the side of the establishment and the government of the day. As BBC founder John Reith confided in his diary during the 1926 General Strike:

‘They know they can trust us not to be really impartial.’

(‘The Reith Diaries’, edited by Charles Stewart, Collins, 1975; entry for 11 May, 1926)

The experienced journalist Peter Osborne [said](#) via Twitter:

'I proposed to the BBC a documentary on Tory Islamophobia three years ago. Zero interest.'

It is possible that in over-reaching themselves, and presenting such a skewed perspective, Panorama and the BBC had inadvertently highlighted the manufactured nature of the 'anti-semitism crisis'. As Asa Winstanley [observed](#):

'all the program proved was just how dishonest the British establishment and the Israel lobby have been in manufacturing this "Labour anti-Semitism crisis" for the past four years.'

In a [piece](#) for *The Electronic Intifada*, Ali Abunimah gave crucial background context, observing that the Israel lobby is working hard to split the left:

'Influential Israel lobby groups are offering "rules" for how Jewish communal organizations can divide the left and break up emerging intersectional coalitions.

'They also advocate for "delegitimizing" Jews deemed too supportive of Palestinian rights.

'Israel and its lobby see the strengthening solidarity between Palestinians and other oppressed groups, especially Black people in the United States, as a major threat and they are determined to fight back.

'Indeed, last year, Al Jazeera's leaked undercover documentary [The Lobby-USA](#) revealed how the Israeli government and its lobby [worked to disrupt](#) the Black Lives Matter movement in retaliation for Black solidarity with Palestine.'

A central strategy of this pro-Israel campaign is to repeatedly state a false equivalence between anti-Zionism and anti-semitism. Abunimah explained:

'Zionism, Israel's state ideology, is [racist](#) because it [grants superior rights to Jews](#) enshrined in [dozens of Israeli laws](#) and holds that Palestinians expelled and exiled from their homeland should not be allowed to return to it solely and exclusively [because they are not Jews](#).

'Anti-Zionism, therefore, is not prejudice against Jews as Israel and its lobby groups claim.

'Anti-Zionism, based in universal human rights principles, is anti-racism.'

A [new report](#) by Israel's [Reut Institute](#) and the US-based [Jewish Council for Public Affairs](#) warned ominously that "'Corbynization" is spreading through segments of the political left' and that 'UK-based anti-Israel groups have been inspiring liberal and progressive elite circles worldwide.'

This, says Abunimah, 'underlines why Israel and its lobby view [discrediting and removing Corbyn](#) as a paramount priority.'

An 'Unconstitutional Animus' Against A Corbyn Government

Two weeks before the Panorama programme, *The Times* [published](#) a leak revealing that Corbyn is alleged by senior UK civil servants to be 'too frail' to become Prime Minister. He was not up to the job, 'physically or mentally'. One anonymous figure at the Civil Service reportedly said:

'When does someone say [he] is too ill to carry on as leader of the Labour Party, let alone prime minister? There must be senior people in the party who know that he is not functioning on all cylinders.'

Corbyn promptly rebutted the '[scurrilous](#)' story, [dismissing](#) it as 'a farrago of nonsense' and insisting he was a 'very fit, very healthy, very active person'. Corbyn's call for an independent investigation into the Civil Service leak to the press was predictably rejected by the government.

[David Miller](#), Professor of Political Sociology at Bristol University, and a researcher in propaganda, [noted](#) that the Civil Service clearly has:

'an unconstitutional animus against a potential Corbyn government and has been briefing against it one way or another through various agencies for some time now.'

As an example, Miller pointed to the [Integrity Initiative](#), set up by the government-funded [Institute for Statecraft](#) whose stated [mission](#) is to:

'counter Russian disinformation and malign influence by harnessing existing expertise and establishing a network of experts, opinion formers and policy makers to educate national audiences in the threat and to help build national capacities to counter it.'

In an article for the *Morning Star*, Labour MP Chris Williamson, [pointed out](#) that this supposed charitable body had 'strayed into smearing Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party'. Its official Twitter account had promoted tweets and articles attacking Corbyn, the Labour Party and their officials. One tweet quoted a newspaper article calling Corbyn a '[useful idiot](#)'. The article then continued:

'His open visceral anti-Westernism helped the Kremlin cause, as surely as if he had been secretly peddling Westminster tittle-tattle for money.'

Williamson warned:

'the chilling manipulations of the Institute for Statecraft are straight out of the cold war playbook.'

Through a series of parliamentary questions, Williamson discovered that the Foreign Office has given more than £2.2 million to the Institute for Statecraft's Integrity Initiative. As David Miller [says](#), 'the use of taxpayers' money to interfere in domestic politics [is] an affront to democracy'. A [report](#) by the [Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media](#) - an

independent network of academics that includes Miller – found that Facebook and Nato had provided funding too.

Establishment opposition to Corbyn also comes from UK military forces. In 2015, the *Sunday Times* [published](#) comments by a senior serving British Army general that Corbyn would face a mutiny as Prime Minister if he ever tried to cancel the Trident nuclear weapons system, withdraw from Nato or reduce the armed forces:

‘The Army just wouldn’t stand for it. The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul to prevent that. You can’t put a maverick in charge of a country’s security.’

‘Failing The Test Of Leadership’ = Failing To Protect Power

The fear of a ‘maverick’ ending up as leader of the country extends to the ‘liberal’ end of the permissible ‘spectrum’ of viewpoints. In our previous [media alert](#), we highlighted the fakery behind accusations of anti-semitism levelled at Labour MP Chris Williamson, mentioned above. On July 8, a [letter](#) signed by more than one hundred prominent members of the Jewish community, including Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein, was published by the *Guardian*. The letter stated:

‘Chris Williamson did not say that the party had been “too apologetic about antisemitism”, as has been widely misreported. He correctly stated that the Labour party has done more than any other party to combat the scourge of antisemitism and that, therefore, its stance should be less apologetic. Such attacks on Jeremy Corbyn’s supporters aim to undermine not only the Labour party’s leadership but also all pro-Palestinian members.’

It continued:

‘The mass media have ignored the huge support for Chris both within and beyond the Labour party. Support that includes many Jews. The party needs people like him, with the energy and determination to fight for social justice. As anti-racist Jews, we regard Chris as our ally; he stands as we do with the oppressed rather than the oppressor. It should also be noted that he has a longer record of campaigning against racism and fascism than most of his detractors.’

However, the letter was swiftly taken down following a [complaint](#) later the same day by the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD). The placeholder *Guardian* page initially said the letter had been removed, ‘pending investigation’. By the following day, the letter had been permanently deleted with [this text](#) given as the explanation:

‘A letter was removed from this page on 9 July 2019 due to errors in the list of signatories provided. We were contacted by an organisation which had not agreed to sign the letter; the organisers of the letter also acknowledge that there were other inaccuracies in the list of signatories.’

The ‘explanation’ lacked detail, would have nonplussed many readers, and notably made no

mention of the complaint from BoD. In a [piece](#) for *The Canary*, John McEvoy said that the complaint from BoD had:

'rightly highlighted that one of the signatories - "Michael Morgan" - had made past racist and abhorrent remarks.'

One of the letter's co-authors, who wished to remain anonymous, told McEvoy that they regretted a lack of oversight over the signatories:

'We were clear that the letter was supposed to be signed by only Jewish people. It was made public a couple of days ago, and received 292 signatures shortly after.

'We tried to confirm which of the signatories were Jewish by contacting them. If we received no response, we took them off the list.

'Michael Morgan replied and told us he was not Jewish, so we took him off the list. His name ended up back on it after transferring the document through different file formats, mistakenly using older files.

'The inclusion of Michael Morgan was an accident and an oversight. His views do not reflect ours.'

But, while there were issues with a few of the signatories, it was clear that the contents of the letter were entirely justified and appropriate. As the co-author of the letter told *The Canary*:

'I think the letter itself is important, and also whether the Board of Deputies think the likes of Chomsky etc. are the "right kind of Jews" is neither here nor there.

'Of course these Jews are not prominent in the Board of Deputies' circles, but this is the issue: The Board of Deputies seem to want to define what "prominent Jew" means. And a lot of people who are Jewish and, like me, on the left, find that difficult to accept. Why is our Jewish identity being erased, and why do they get to define who is a Jew?'

That the *Guardian* refused to reinstate the letter is deplorable; a symptom of the paper's appalling role in fuelling the fake anti-semitism 'crisis'. As journalist John Pilger [noted](#) via Twitter:

'The Guardian has yet to apologise for two major fabrications: that Julian #Assange conspired with Moscow to escape Britain; and that he met Trump crony Paul Manafort plus Russians. The paper's descent quickens with this censorship'

Last month, journalist Matt Kennard [revealed](#) the *Guardian's* [collusion](#) with UK security services in media censorship. Deputy editor Paul Johnson had been personally thanked by the Defence and Security Media Advisory Notice (or D-Notice) committee for 're-establishing links' with the paper in the wake of its [publication](#) of material from CIA whistleblower

Edward Snowden in 2013. Johnson was one of three *Guardian* staffers who took part in the subsequent [destruction](#) of computer hard drives containing Snowden files in the *Guardian*'s basement, overseen by two security officials from GCHQ. He then joined the D-Notice committee in 2014. The committee, run by the Ministry of Defence, issues 'advisory warnings' that are essentially attempts to gag the media from publishing information that might harm state interests.

D-Notice meeting [minutes](#) reveal that Air Vice-Marshal Andrew Vallance reported that the committee's relationship with the *Guardian* has 'continued to strengthen' and that there were 'regular dialogues' with its journalists. Kennard suggested that the *Guardian* was [rewarded](#) for its acquiescence with security interests by being granted an unprecedented [exclusive interview](#) with a serving head of MI5 in 2016.

Yet another clear indication of the paper's plummeting descent was the *Guardian*'s publication of a full-page [advertisement](#) on July 17 from more than sixty Labour peers lambasting Corbyn:

'You have failed to defend our party's anti-racist values. You have therefore failed the test of leadership.'

The party was 'no longer a safe place for all members and supporters', claimed the peers, 'whatever their ethnicity or faith.' The signatories, comprising around one-third of the party's members in the House of Lords, included former Cabinet members Peter Mandelson, Peter Hain and John Reid from the discredited, blood-soaked years of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

The advert was headed:

'The Labour Party welcomes everyone* irrespective of race, creed, gender identity, or sexual orientation (*except, it seems, Jews). This is your legacy, Mr Corbyn.'

In publishing the advert, the *Guardian* was once again complicit in promoting a false, elite-friendly narrative about an institutionally anti-semitic Labour Party under Corbyn. The advert itself generated considerable media coverage, just as the peers no doubt intended, with around thirty articles in the press. 'Jews feel unsafe in "toxic" Labour, say 67 of party's own peers', [blasted](#) the *Daily Mail*. The *Evening Standard* carried the [headline](#): 'Corbyn "must show his shame on anti-Semitism": Labour ex-minister Lord Robertson joins peers' attack on leader'. The *Express* [said](#): 'Labour civil WAR: Corbyn accused of "failing leadership" by peers over anti-Semitism'. The overall message was clear: Labour is anti-semitic under Corbyn, and he is not fit to become Prime Minister.

Shredding any semblance of 'impartiality', Robert Peston, ITV's political editor, [tweeted](#):

'What has it come to in the Labour Party when the only way Labour peers feel they can communicate with their leader @jeremycorbyn is to pay to take out an advert in @guardian! No major party has ever been this dysfunctional'

Jonathan Cook [responded](#) appropriately:

'What has it come to in the Labour party when its most establishment figures decide to destroy their party from within by fuelling the corporate media smears against a leader twice elected by members! No major party has ever been this leftwing before. (Fixed that for you Pesto!)

Thinking along similar lines to Peston, Channel 4 News presenter Krishnan Guru-Murty [observed](#) via Twitter:

'The Labour Party is now unable to find anyone prepared to come on #c4news tonight to answer questions about antisemitism and the ad taken out by over 60 Labour Peers today telling Jeremy Corbyn he had failed to defend the party's values.'

As so often happens when a corporate journalist ventures forth into the world of social media, rebuttals flew in. Twitter user Jon Harding [replied](#):

'Members support Corbyn because he supports our values - community, equality, responsibility, solidarity and fairness

'The media attack us everyday, calling us anti-Semitic. But Corbyn remains steadfast, and support for Corbyn is solid, because we can see through the smears'

Another Twitter user [replied](#) to Guru-Murty:

'Perhaps you should do a segment on how left wing Corbyn supporting Jews are being at best ignored, at worst, harassed, doxed & vilified by people who don't agree with them, and how many are afraid to voice their opinions because of it!'

As far as we could tell, the Channel 4 News man had nothing to say in response.

An [article](#) on the *Skwawkbox* website quoted Labour activists on Twitter saying that 'the list of signatories reads like a "Who's Who" of Blairite leftovers'. The article also noted that of the 64 Lords who signed the advert:

'at least twenty-four are corporate lobbyists or on boards of hedge funds, banks, "global security consultancies" and, particularly, private health firms. Others have family links to similar enterprises.'

In other words, these are the primary interests which are being protected in attacking Corbyn.

More *Guardian* Censorship

On the same day (July 17) that the Lords advert was published, a remarkable email from *Guardian* cartoonist Steve Bell was [circulated](#) on social media. Bell had sent it to a *Guardian* editor, possibly Katharine Viner herself. It is worth quoting in full:

Dear [Redacted]

After our bizarre telephone conversation yesterday, I feared you might not publish today's strip, but still cannot understand why the attached should be more liable to legal challenge from Tom Watson than either of the previous two strips that you have already published. You said the 'lawyers were concerned', but what about? It's not antisemitic nor is it libellous, even though it includes a caricature of Binyamin Netanyahu. If Watson chose to object it would make him look far sillier than he does in the cartoon.

I suspect that the real problem is that it contravenes some mysterious editorial line that has been drawn around the subject of antisemitism and the infernal subject of 'antisemitic tropes'. In some ways this is even more troubling for me than specious charges of antisemitism. Does the Guardian no longer tolerate content that counters its editorial line?

Why in today's paper has the Guardian published a highly partisan and personally insulting (to the leader of the Labour Party) advert on page 20 that uses the Labour Party logo, but is clearly not a Labour Party approved advert? I would have thought that there would be far more reason to expect a legal challenge on that than on my cartoon. Or is it that you don't want to offend poor Tom but are quite happy to offend poor Jeremy?

Why on earth did the Guardian publish, then unpublish, a letter in support of Chris Williamson, signed by 100 people identifying themselves as Jewish, including Noam Chomsky? Were they the wrong kind of Jews? The paper's contortions on this subject do not do it any credit. If there is a reasoned position on this contentious issue, then I would dearly like to see it laid out clearly so we can all see where we stand. Or are there some subjects that we just can't touch?

Best wishes

Steve Bell

In his previous two strips on [July 15](#) and [July 16](#) of his long-running cartoon series, 'If...', Bell had depicted Labour deputy leader Tom Watson as the 'Antisemite Finder General', harking back to the [Witchfinder General](#) of the 17th century English Civil War. As Bell said in his email, these two earlier strips were obviously considered fit for publication. In the censored strip for [July 17](#), deemed unacceptable by the *Guardian*, but then [published exclusively](#) by *Socialist Worker*, Watson's horse sniffs out an 'antisemitic trope'. Watson encounters Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu along with caricatures clearly meant as Donald Trump and Boris Johnson.

As James Wright observed in a *Canary* [piece](#) about the *Guardian's* censorship, Bell appeared to be ridiculing a fundamental contradiction of the pro-Israel establishment. It is anti-semitic to suppose that a Jewish person must be a supporter of Israel. And yet, Netanyahu regularly claims that Israel speaks for all Jewish people. Thus, [for example](#):

'On this day, on behalf of the Jewish people, I say to those who have sought and still seek to destroy us: You have failed and you will fail.'

Moreover, Netanyahu's embrace of far-right nationalist leaders around the world (not least Trump), actually makes Jews 'more vulnerable to anti-Semitism and hate crimes in their own countries', [warned](#) racism researcher Rachel Shenhav-Goldberg. And author Zeev Sternhell

noted in a [piece](#) for *Foreign Policy* that Israel under Netanyahu:

'sees itself as an integral part of this anti-liberal bloc led by nativist xenophobes who traffic in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories such as Hungary's Viktor Orban and Poland's Jaroslaw Kaczynski.'

Boris Johnson, of course, has a [long record](#) of sexist, homophobic and racist remarks. He has [referred](#) to black people as 'piccaninnies' with 'watermelon smiles' and [likened](#) Muslim women to letterboxes. As for Trump, he [told](#) US Jews that Netanyahu is 'your Prime Minister', thus conflating Jews with Israelis. It is worth adding that Trump recently told four Congresswomen of colour – Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashia Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley – to 'go back' and 'help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came'. This is racism. Three of the politicians were born in the United States. The fourth, Omar, moved to the US with her family when she was ten years old after fleeing war in Somalia. Jeremy Hunt and Boris Johnson, the two contenders to become Tory leader and thus the next Prime Minister, both [refused](#) to call Trump's remarks racist, in [stark contrast](#) to Jeremy Corbyn.

On the same day that the *Guardian* censored the Bell cartoon strip, it provided Labour MP Margaret Hodge with a [platform](#) to once again abuse Jeremy Corbyn as 'a racist and an antisemite'. The *Guardian's* editorial bias could hardly be more glaring.

Our searches of the ProQuest media database showed that *not a single UK newspaper* reported the *Guardian's* censorship of Steve Bell. Nobody should be surprised. After all, silence about uncomfortable topics is one of the operating principles of the corporate media.

We asked John Pilger to comment on Bell's email. He told us:

'Steve Bell's reasoned protest to a gatekeeper on the Guardian, a newspaper often given credibility by his brilliance, is a warning. I wanted to write that it was a warning to journalists — but there are few who are not now cowed into silence or collaborators. They are not journalists any more, but functionaries, even awarded prizes for holding the line. Steve Bell's memo is a warning to the wider society. His wonderfully anarchic satire is needed more than ever in this corporate, conformist world with its ever present intimidation.

'The Guardian advertisement he refers to in effect demands the outlawing of dissent; in the United States, the firing of political cartoonists who cross the line is now routine. The accusation of anti-Semitism thrown at principled opponents of the longest, most brutal military occupation in modern times and the racism of the Israeli state, now enshrined in Israeli law, ought to be beyond contempt. Yet the Guardian's "contortions", as Steve Bell calls them, effectively peddle the lie that criticism of Israel and its Zionist ideology is anti-Semitic. This is no different from the lies the Guardian has told about Julian Assange. So beware. Not only is the campaign to destroy Jeremy Corbyn well advanced, so, too, is the consignment of real journalism, and truth, to a permanent underground.'

(Email to Media Lens, July 19, 2019)

The root cause of this campaign to destroy Corbyn is to block any hope of systemic change for the benefit of the general population. Such a prospect is deemed unacceptable to

established power. For the sake of society, and the larger battle to [prevent climate breakdown](#), we urgently need to take back power from those who have stolen it.

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