

## Israel Up in Arms over the “Corbyn Threat”

By [Neve Gordon](#)

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*Following Jeremy Corbyn’s election as Labour’s new leader, the news in Israel was bleak. “[New Labor Leader in Britain: Anti-Zionist](#)” read the headline of *Yisrael Hayom*, the most widely read newspaper in Israel, which is owned by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s longtime supporter, casino king Sheldon Adelson. The subtitle explained: “Bad Surprise: The newly elected head of opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, who in the past called for a dialogue with ‘friends’ from Hamas and Hezbollah, is known as a radical lefty, an admirer of Karl Marx.”*

The article goes on to claim that Corbyn has donated money to Holocaust deniers and notes with alarm that, as head of the opposition, he has the right to receive sensitive security and diplomatic updates.

One might have expected a different line from Ynet, Israel’s most visited online news source, which was adamantly against Netanyahu’s re-election in March 2015. But Ynet did not exude enthusiasm for Corbyn either, rather it characterised him as “[A fierce opponent of Israel](#).” Repeating practically all of the accusations made in *Yisrael Hayom*, it also criticised Corbyn for portraying Osama Bin Laden’s assassination as a “tragedy”. The new Labour leader was blamed for claiming that it would have been more just if the US had arrested Bin Laden and brought him to trial.



Newly elected Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn attending a pro-refugee march in London, England on September 12, 2015. (AA) - See more at: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/israel-arms-over-corbyn-threat-244769470#sthash.WkEYHuX0.dpuf>

NRG, another prominent news website, used the ultimate weapon in its [headline](#): “Newly elected Labor Leader donated to Holocaust Denier.” NRG explained that Corbyn had donated money to the pro-Palestinian NGO *Deir Yassin Remembered*, which is run by Holocaust denier Paul Eizen. It added that seven out of 10 Jews in Britain were worried about Corbyn’s election, and that the Labour Party itself was also troubled.

[Another article](#) explained to the Israeli audience the damage Corbyn’s victory would have on Britain’s Labour Party, announcing that it was as if Knesset Member Jamal Zahalka – a Palestinian nationalist from the Joint Arab List – had become the head of the Israeli Labor Party. The fact that Zahalka has never been part of Labour and that Corbyn has been a member of the British party for 40 years seemed to be irrelevant.

Assuming an ostensibly universalist – as opposed to Zionist – perspective, Anshel Pfeffer from Israel’s liberal Haaretz offered the most [scathing analysis](#), describing Corbyn’s victory as “Another Step in Britain’s Departure From the World Stage”.

The fact that over a quarter of a million Labour members and voters affiliated with the party have just elected a leader who blames the West for Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, who fervently supports repressive kleptocracies like Chavista Venezuela and has supported terrorist groups around the world – from Northern Ireland to Iraq – in the name of anti-imperialism, could either mean that they agree with him on this, or more likely, the majority of them simply don’t care. They voted Corbyn for his anti-austerity policies, his willingness to espouse a clear socialist alternative, including the nationalisation of public transport and energy companies, and the fact that, unlike the other leadership candidates, he refuses to compromise his beliefs for something as trivial as being elected prime minister and implementing at least some of his policies.

Pfeffer went on to describe Corbyn as a “full-paid member of every fashionable cause of the radical-left, including his unquestioning support for Holocaust deniers and blood libellers – as long as they’re ‘pro-Palestinian’”.

What is fascinating in this piece, however, is not only the portrayal of Corbyn, but the way Israel’s most left-wing mainstream news outlet describes the United Kingdom’s demos with utter disdain. In Pfeffer’s view, Corbyn’s voters are ignorant or uninterested in their country’s foreign policy. Corbyn, he exclaims, “wouldn’t have been elected Labour leader with the largest personal mandate in the party’s history, if it were not for the fact that these issues simply didn’t matter to the vast majority of his supporters”.

The disturbing logic informing Pfeffer’s analysis is that in order to be a player on the world stage one has to support either a mainstream or a right-wing agenda. A leader cannot have a complex political agenda, challenge imperialism, support anti-colonial movements, or espouse an international socialist agenda if he or she wants to have influence in the global arena. He also unwittingly reveals that the most hated enemy of liberal Zionism is actually the international left, not the right. And yet, ironically, the attempt to render the political vocabulary of the left as both illegitimate and ridiculous suggests that it still constitutes a viable threat.

**Neve Gordon** is the author of *Israel’s Occupation* and co-author of *The Human Right to Dominate*.

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