

Jewish Chronicle's Libel Payouts Were a Small Price to Pay for Smearing Corbyn and the Left

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The Jewish Chronicle, a weekly newspaper that was saved from liquidation last year by a consortium led by a former senior adviser to Theresa May, has been exposed as having a quite astonishing record of journalistic failings.

Over the past three years, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), the misnamed and feeble “press regulator” created by the billionaire-owned corporate media, has found the paper to have breached its code of practice on at least 28 occasions. The weekly has also lost, or been forced to settle, at least four libel cases over the same period.

According to Brian Cathcart, a professor of journalism at Kingston University in London, that means one in every four or five editions of the Chronicle has broken either the law or the IPSO code. He [describes](#) that, rather generously, as a “collapse of journalistic standards” at the paper.

IPSO, led by **Lord Edward Faulks**, a former Conservative minister, has repeatedly failed to launch any kind of formal investigation into this long-term pattern of rule and law-breaking by the Jewish Chronicle. He has also dragged his feet in responding to calls from a group of nine individuals maligned by the paper that IPSO urgently needs to carry out an inquiry into the paper’s editorial standards.

We urge [@IpsNews](#) to launch a Standards Investigation into the Jewish Chronicle without delay.

We have seen 28 recorded breaches of the Editors’ Code and four libel defeats in just three years. [@pressgazette](#) [@journalism_news](#)
pic.twitter.com/BUdXlhXkAL

— Jo Bird (@bird4riv) [August 3, 2021](#)

Consequently, IPSO has left itself in no position to take action against the paper, even assuming it wished to. The “press regulator” has not fined the Chronicle – one of its powers – or imposed any other kind of sanction. It has not insisted on special training to end the

Chronicle's systematic editorial failings. And the paper's editor, Stephen Pollard, has remained in place.

And here one needs to ask why.

Holding the line

Cathcart's main explanation is that IPSO, as the creature of the billionaire press, is there to "handle" complaints – in the sense of making them go away – rather than seriously hold the media to account or punish its transgressions.

IPSO has never fined or sanctioned any of its member publications since it was created seven years ago by the owners of the corporate media to avoid the establishment of a proper regulatory body in the wake of the Levenson public inquiry into media abuses such as the phone hacking scandal.

The bar for launching an investigation by IPSO was intentionally set so high – failings must be shown to be "serious and systematic" – that the "press regulator" and its corporate media backers assumed they would plausibly be able to argue that no paper ever reached it.

The Chronicle has put even this sham form of regulation to the severest test.

Cathcart argues that IPSO's job has been to hold the line. If it tackled the Jewish Chronicle for its serial deceptions and character assassinations, it would risk paving the way to similar sanctions being imposed on Rupert Murdoch's titles.

Attack dog

But there is an additional reason why IPSO is so loath to crack down on the Chronicle's systematic editorial failings. And that is because, from the point of view of the British establishment, those failings were necessary and encouraged.

It is important to highlight the context for the Chronicle's egregious transgressions of the editors' code of practice and libel laws. Those fabrications and deceptions were needed because they lay at the heart of the establishment's campaign to be rid of former Labour leader, **Jeremy Corbyn**.

The Jewish Chronicle served as the chief attack dog on Corbyn and the Labour left, in service of an establishment represented by the Conservative party and the long-dominant right wing of the Labour party.

Whereas the rest of the corporate media tried to discredit Corbyn and the Labour left with a range of early, lamentable claims – that he was scruffy, unpatriotic, sexist, a national security threat, a former Soviet spy – the Jewish Chronicle's task was more complicated but far more effective.

The paper's role was to breathe life into the claim that Corbyn and his supporters were anti-semites, and the paper managed it by maliciously conflating antisemitism and the left's criticisms of Israel as a racist, apartheid state that oppresses Palestinians.

apartheid state will make it harder to smear Israel's critics as antisemites for arguing that the Jewish state is a racist endeavour <https://t.co/ubVRYd3nhj>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [January 14, 2021](#)

Confess or you're guilty

The Chronicle's job was to initiate the antisemitism libels and lies against Corbyn and his followers that served to feed and rationalise the fears of prominent sections of the Jewish community. Those fears could then be cited by the rest of the corporate media as evidence that Labour was riding roughshod over the Jewish community's "sensitivities". And in turn the Labour left's supposed indifference to Jewish sensitivities could be attributed to its rampant antisemitism.

The Jewish Chronicle deserves only ridicule for its latest efforts to smear Jeremy Corbyn as an anti-semite - the Labour leader nodded when a rabbi noted that the religion of Judaism is separate and distinct from the political ideology of Zionism <https://t.co/coklFmmZqn>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [January 7, 2019](#)

It culminated in the McCarthyite claim - now being enforced by Corbyn's successor as Labour leader, Keir Starmer - that to deny Labour has some especial antisemitism problem, separate from that found more generally in British society, is itself proof of antisemitism. Once accused of antisemitism, as the Labour left endlessly is, one is guilty by definition - the choice is either to confess to antisemitism or be proven an antisemite by denying the accusation.

Like a victim caught in quicksand, the more vigorously the Labour left has rejected claims that the party is riddled with antisemitism the more it has sunk into the mire created by the Jewish Chronicle and others.

It is therefore hardly surprising that so many victims of the Chronicle's libels and code violations are Corbyn supporters targeted in the antisemitism witch-hunt. Without these deceptions, the antisemitism claims against the Labour party would have looked even more preposterous than they did to anyone familiar with the evidence.

Another of Labour's 'anti-semitism' suspension cases - instigated by the Jewish Chronicle, of course - evaporates into thin air on closer inspection. Even the hyper-conservative press standards watchdog IPSO rejects the Chronicle's claims <https://t.co/ATOen1nptr>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [August 9, 2018](#)

False accusations

For those interested, here are those four recent libel cases that went against the Chronicle:

September 2019: “The Jewish Chronicle has paid out £50,000 in libel damages to a UK charity [Interpal] that provides aid to Palestinians after wrongly linking it to terrorism.”

February 2020: “The libel settlement comes after a UK press regulator in December ruled that the paper’s four articles about [Labour activist Audrey] White had been ‘significantly misleading’ and that the paper had engaged in ‘unacceptable’ obstruction of their investigation.”

October 2020: “Nada al Sanjari, a school teacher and Labour councillor, was the subject of a number of articles published by the newspaper in 2019 that claimed she was one of several Momentum activists responsible for inviting another activist who the Jewish Chronicle characterised as anti-Semitic to a Labour Party event.”

July 2021: “The publication falsely accused [Marc] Wadsworth, in an article on its website in March, of being part of a group of current and ex-Labour members targeting Jewish activists in the party.”

Interesting that the publications most vociferous in denouncing any suggestion that antisemitism has been weaponised against the left, like the Jewish Chronicle, keep having to pay damages in libel cases for weaponising antisemitism against the left <https://t.co/yYLjk7qeqR>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [May 29, 2021](#)

It is not hard to spot the theme of all these smears, and many others, which suggest that those in solidarity with Palestinians under Israeli oppression, [including Jews](#), are antisemites or guilty of supporting terrorism.

Saved from liquidation

Remember, the 28 IPSO code violations – media euphemism for fabrications and deceptions – are only the tip of the iceberg. It is almost certain that many of those maligned by the Chronicle did not have the time, energy or resources to pursue the weekly paper either through the pointless IPSO “regulation” process or through extremely costly law courts.

And remember too that IPSO found against the Chronicle for breaching its code at least 28 times, even though that code was designed to give IPSO’s member publications every possible benefit of the doubt. IPSO has no incentive to highlight its members’ failings, especially when it was set up to provide the government with a pretext for not creating a truly independent regulatory body.

The reality is that the 180-year-old Jewish Chronicle, or JC as it has remodelled itself, would have gone out of business some time ago had it not been twice saved from liquidation by powerful, establishment figures.

It avoided closure in 2019 after it was [bailed out](#) by “community-minded individuals, families and charitable trusts” following massive losses. The identities of those donors were not disclosed.

At the time Stephen Pollard highlighted his paper’s crucial role: “There’s certainly been a huge need for the journalism that the JC does in especially looking at the anti-Semitism in

the Labour party and elsewhere.”

Consortium of investors

Then only a year later the Chronicle had to be [rescued again](#), this time by a shadowy consortium of investors who promised to pump in millions to keep the paper afloat and reimburse those who had donated the previous year.

Why these financiers appear so committed to a paper with proven systematic editorial failings, and which continues to be headed by the same editor who has overseen those serious failings for years, was underscored at the time by Alan Jacobs, the paper’s departing chairman.

He [observed](#) that the donors who bailed out the paper in 2019 “can be proud that their combined generosity allowed the JC to survive long enough to help to see off Jeremy Corbyn and friends, one of the greatest threats to face British Jewry in the JC’s existence.”

Corbyn had lost the general election to a Conservative party led by Boris Johnson later that same year.

The public face of last year’s consortium was Sir Robbie Gibb, a former BBC executive and a longtime ally of figures on the Conservative right. He served as Theresa May’s spin doctor when she was prime minister. He was also an early adviser to GB News, a recent attempt to replicate the overtly rightwing Fox News channel in the UK.

Other visible consortium members are associated with the antisemitism campaign against Corbyn. They include former rightwing Labour MP John Woodcock, who [cited antisemitism](#) as his reason for quitting the party after it had begun investigating him for sending inappropriate messages to a female staff member.

Another is Jonathan Sacerdoti, a regular “analyst” on the BBC, ITV and Ch4 who previously served as a spokesperson for the Campaign Against Antisemitism, a [lobby group](#) set up back in 2014 specifically to discredit critics of Israel as antisemites.

My latest: Anti-Palestinian bigotry from a self-styled antisemitism watchdog is the latest move to dress up bullying and threats as victimhood
<https://t.co/KRaPEuA1jy>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [May 12, 2020](#)

And then there is John Ware, a former Sun journalist turned BBC reporter who fronted probably the single most damaging programme on Corbyn. An hour-long Panorama “special” accusing Labour of antisemitism was deeply flawed, misleading and failed to acknowledge that several unnamed figures it interviewed were also pro-Israel lobbyists.

My latest: With last night's Panorama programme on supposed 'institutional anti-semitism' in Labour, the BBC demonstrated that it has become a media attack dog in the hands of the ruling Conservative party
<https://t.co/dSDaaLBY0S>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [July 11, 2019](#)

It would probably be unwise for me to say more about Ware or his publicly stated views on Muslims, shared by the Jewish Chronicle, because he has recently become [litigious](#). He apparently has deep pockets, helping to fund both the rescue of the Chronicle and law suits against critics.

Exceptional indulgence

But the exceptional indulgence of the Jewish Chronicle, both by IPSO and prominent figures in broadcasting, and the paper's continuing credibility as a source of news for the wider corporate media, indicates how the antisemitism narrative about Labour served, and continues to serve, the British establishment.

My latest: In waging war on Labour's left wing, Starmer is determined to prove that the party is a safe pair of hands for the British establishment. Labour is being reinvented as the Tory party of old, emphasising tradition, patriotism and family values <https://t.co/Cs18fu7Om0>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [April 5, 2021](#)

Represented politically by the Conservative party and the Labour right, that establishment was able to reassert its cosy parliamentary duopoly by ousting any meaningful challenge from the Labour left. With Corbyn gone, the threat of real politics has disappeared. We are back to one-party, corporate rule under the guise of two parties.

Which is why IPSO cannot take any meaningful action against the Jewish Chronicle. To do so would pull the rug from under the antisemitism narrative that destroyed Corbyn and is now being used by his successor, Starmer, to [purge](#) Labour of the remnants of the left and to distance the party as far as possible from any [lingering signs](#) of [Palestinian solidarity](#).

As Starmer's Labour party expels film-maker Ken Loach for not agreeing to join the witch-hunt against Jewish party members and others, here's my article explaining the real reason why Loach and Corbyn have been purged <https://t.co/jlafNhKgro>

— Jonathan Cook (@Jonathan_K_Cook) [August 15, 2021](#)

Exposure of the Jewish Chronicle as an editorial wrecking ball aimed at the left would show just how much the paper and the antisemitism narrative it bolstered were key to the Conservative party's successful smearing of Corbyn that helped to keep him out of Number 10. It would highlight the enduring collusion between the corporate media and the political elite.

And it would indicate that corporate media is not really an exercise in capitalist, free-market economics, where profitable outlets drive out those that are unpopular. Rather loss-making corporate media such as the Jewish Chronicle are a price the establishment is only too happy to bear as long as those publications fulfil a more important purpose: ensuring that the political and economic climate remains favourable to the ruling class.

The Jewish Chronicle has played its part in destroying Corbyn and the left. Now it will

continue that role by policing the public discourse and ensuring that no one like Corbyn ever gets near power again. Those libel payouts were a small price to pay.

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This essay first appeared on Jonathan Cook's blog: <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/>

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