



Statement on the Labour Party

Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP

After four decades, I have made the terribly difficult decision that I can no longer remain a member of the Labour Party and have today resigned from it.

It has been an enormous honour and privilege to serve as a Labour councillor, MP and minister over the past 25 years and I never believed I would be forced to leave the party.

I am hugely grateful for the chance to serve. None of this would have been possible without Labour Party members who have campaigned with and for me.

But the values that led me to join the Labour Party are the same values that have led me to leave it today.

My mum and dad both came from Ireland. Their working lives were hard: they had manual jobs and often faced discrimination, but they wanted – and achieved – something different and better for their children. Good schools and my parents' hard work gave my sisters and I a great start in life, a university education and decent jobs.

I learned from my mum and dad the dignity of work and the evil of racism and prejudice. I also learned the value of solidarity. I saw how, through the Irish Club my dad was the secretary of, people stuck together, helped each other through the hard times, and treated each other with fairness and decency.

That experience and those values led me to join the Labour Party. Equality is the Labour Party's founding principle: providing a better, fairer future for all our children and grandchildren.

That requires and demands that we stand up to racism in all its forms; a principle which all previous Labour leaders and the Labour governments of Harold Wilson, Jim Callaghan, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown upheld and honoured.

Over the past three years, however, the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn has become infected with the scourge of anti-Jewish racism. This problem simply did not exist in the party before his election as leader. No previous Labour leader would have allowed this huge shame to befall the party.

I have always believed that we must be especially vigilant against the oldest hatred; history teaches us the tragic and horrific results of a failure to do so.

I have been horrified, appalled and angered to see the Labour leadership's dereliction of duty in the face of this evil.

Over the past year, I have visited synagogues, attended demonstrations against antisemitism and spoken to Jewish constituents on doorsteps. On every occasion, I have seen and heard bewilderment, fear and anger. At all times, I pledged my solidarity and promised action.

Today, having fought for as long as I can within the Labour Party, I honour my pledge of solidarity.

I cannot remain a member of the Labour Party while its leadership allows Jews to be abused with impunity and the victims of such abuse to be ridiculed, have their motives questioned, and their integrity called into doubt.

I cannot remain a member of the Labour Party while its leadership singles out for demonization and delegitimization the world's only Jewish state.

And I cannot remain a member of the Labour Party while this requires me to suggest that I believe Jeremy Corbyn – a man who has presided over the culture of anti-Jewish racism and hatred for Israel which now afflicts my former party – is fit to be Prime Minister of this country. He is not.

The Labour leadership has pledged action against antisemitism for three years. At every turn, it has resisted, ignored and snubbed the legitimate demands of the Jewish community, made through their representative institutions.

Instead, it has offered white-wash reports.

It has operated a revolving door disciplinary policy with those accused of antisemitism briefly suspended and then quietly readmitted to the party.

And it has allowed its surrogates to belittle the scale of the problem and attack those who try to bring it to light.

Last summer, after Labour's behaviour had forced Jews to demonstrate in Parliament Square; after the party had refused to adopt in full the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism; and after weeks of revelations about his own alleged links to Holocaust deniers, antisemites and terrorists, Jeremy Corbyn had but one priority: to preserve the right of antisemites to label Israel a "racist endeavour".

That priority tells me all I need to know about his fitness to lead the Labour Party and our country.

There is only one credible explanation for such behaviour.

It is that anti-Jewish racism and the sensitivities of British Jews simply do not matter enough to the Labour leadership.

Given a choice between the support of antisemites, and ridding the party of Jew-hate, they have decided to side with the antisemites.

I refuse to accept that choice and I wish to stand with British Jews and Jewish members of the Labour Party and Members of Parliament who have suffered terrible abuse from supporters of the Labour leadership.

I salute Luciana Berger on her courageous stand against antisemitism. I pay tribute as well to those, such as the wonderful Dame Louise Ellman, who have decided to continue the fight from within the Labour Party. I wish them, and stalwart allies such as Tom Watson, only the very best in their continuing efforts and I hope my decision will help the much-needed process of real action and change.

But for now, anti-Jewish racism, we are told, cannot be eradicated within the party and it would be “foolish” to pretend otherwise.

I cannot in good conscience support or represent a party which adopts such an attitude. The British people deserve so much better.

The antisemitism crisis has thrown a harsh light on the values and behaviour of Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party.

Like its populist ideological bedfellows, it evinces a disdain for the rights of minorities, and adopts a bullying, aggressive attitude to those who dare to question its cult-like received wisdom.

It engages in bizarre, offensive and dangerous conspiracy theories – ones often founded on classic antisemitic tropes evoking the powerful hidden hand of “Rothschilds”, Zionists and the “Israel lobby” – and sets aside the truth when politically inconvenient.

And it has replaced Labour’s traditional message of openness, hope and optimism with an all-consuming narrative founded on rage, betrayal and the hunt for heretics.

I do not believe that such an attitude – one that is all too reminiscent of Donald Trump’s Republican party, the European far right and some, but by no means all, Brexiteers – is in the least bit healthy for society or for our democracy.

The first duty of any government is the safety and security of its citizens.

The Jewish community has made clear that it believes a Jeremy Corbyn government would be an existential threat to it. I will not campaign to put such a government into office.

If the threat a Corbyn government posed were simply to Jews, that would be reason enough for me to do all that I can to oppose such a threat.

But it is an oft-state truism that what starts with Jews never ends with Jews.

The mindset, ideology and worldview that tolerates antisemitism poses a threat to the British public, Jew and non-Jew alike.

It is one that would rip up the alliances which have kept our country safe for the past seven decades.

It is one that would ostracise the Middle East's only democracy in favour of the Ayatollahs in Tehran: a regime which tramples on human rights, has the blood of tens of thousands of Syrians on its hands, and seeks to dominate and subjugate the region and impose its theocratic brutal rule.

And it is one that would abandon our friends in Europe in favour of appeasing Vladimir Putin: the head of a country which launched a chemical weapons attack on British soil, but which – despite a mountain of evidence and the conclusions of the intelligence community – Jeremy Corbyn repeatedly refused to blame the Russian state for.


Nine years of Tory government have caused enormous damage to my constituency and the country.

Held hostage by the hard right of her party, the Prime Minister is now preparing to inflict a crippling hard Brexit – one that will rob the young of their future.

Jeremy Corbyn and the Stalinist clique that surrounds him offers no real opposition to any of this, instead they are too busy purging their perceived ideological enemies within and obsessing over issues that are of little interest to the British people.

I will continue to fight for the values that the Labour Party has traditionally upheld – for equality, the eradication of poverty and discrimination, and a fair shot at their dreams for all our children and young people.

But I cannot and will not do that from within an institutionally antisemitic party.



Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP
Member of Parliament for Enfield North