UK’s chief rabbi aids right-wing campaign against Corbyn

By Jean Shaoul
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On Tuesday, as Jeremy Corbyn launched Labour’s “race and faith manifesto,” a hitherto unknown group, the Community United against Labour Party anti-Semitism, set up three billboards mounted on trucks and vans with messages, over a hashtag #NeverCorbyn, reading: “A vote for Labour is a vote for racism,” “Keep anti-Semitism out of Downing Street,” and “A home for holocaust denial and terrorist supporters.” The billboards had been crowdfunded well in advance of the event.

As the Labour leader entered the venue, protesters held up placards reading “Racist Corbyn—unfit to be PM,” and chanted “Racist, racist” and “Corbyn is a racist.”

Corbyn was about to launch a manifesto that reads, “A Labour government will build a society and world free from all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.”

The day before, the Murdoch-owned Times featured an hysterical attack on Corbyn in the form of an op-ed by Ephraim Mirvis, Britain’s chief rabbi. The piece was headlined, “What will become of Jews in Britain if Labour forms the next government?”

Mirvis’ attack was unprecedented for an election campaign in the UK, where it is the convention for faith leaders to refrain from endorsing candidates. Accusing Corbyn of anti-Semitism, Mirvis wrote that the Labour leader was responsible for a “poison sanctioned from the top” taking root in the party. Jews were justifiably anxious about the prospect of the party forming the next government, Mirvis claimed.

“The Jewish community has watched with incredulity,” he wrote, “as supporters of the Labour leadership have hounded parliamentarians, members and even staff out of the party for challenging anti-Jewish racism.”

Advising on how to vote, he declared, “How complicit in prejudice would a leader of Her Majesty’s opposition have to be to be considered unfit for office?”

Within hours, the chief rabbi’s slanders were followed by more smears from Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury and leader of the Church of England, long known as “the Tory Party at prayer.” Welby tweeted about the “deep sense of insecurity and fear felt by many British Jews.”

On Tuesday evening, amid McCarthyite-style media coverage, Corbyn was interviewed for 30 minutes on the BBC by the former editor of Murdoch’s Sun, Andrew Neil. Neil opened the interview by citing Mirvis’ comments, saying that he was right and repeatedly insisting that Corbyn apologize to British Jews.

Corbyn’s efforts to defend himself and his party prompted a second round of front-page headlines and editorials denouncing him as a “hard left” danger.

Everyone should be clear about what is going on. The persecution and hounding of Corbyn is a coordinated right-wing political destabilisation operation aimed at preventing his election and facilitating his subsequent removal as Labour leader.

The US is orchestrating this black propaganda campaign, in cahoots with Israel’s lobby groups and the security agencies of the UK and Israel. It is politically led by right-wing Blairites in Corbyn’s own party, the Liberals Democrats, the Conservative government and a pliant and corrupt pro-business media.

The game plan for this offensive was revealed by US President Donald Trump and his secretary of state Mike Pompeo. Trump said earlier this month on LBC Radio to far-right Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage that he opposed Corbyn being elected as prime minister. This followed an intervention in June when Pompeo warned that Washington would not allow a Corbyn-led Labour government to take office and would “push back” to prevent it.

At a conference of American Jewish organisations, Pompeo was asked whether, should Corbyn be elected, he would be willing “to work with us to take on actions if
life becomes very difficult for Jews in the UK?"

Pompeo replied, “It could be that Mr. Corbyn manages
to run the gauntlet and get elected. It’s possible. You
should know, we won’t wait for him to do those things to
begin to push back. We will do our level best… It’s too
risky and too important and too hard once it’s already
happened.”

The “push-back” is now underway.

The Jewish Chronicle has played a central role. On
November 7, it published a front-page appeal urging
non-Jews not to support Labour, which was said to
represent “an existential threat” to the Jewish community
in Britain. Stephen Pollard, a free market advocate who is
the newspaper’s editor, also writes frequently for the
Daily Express, the Daily Mail, the Sun and the Daily
Telegraph — the right-wing stable of Britain’s press.

Jonathan Freedland of the anti-Corbyn Guardian stepped into the fray, suggesting that British Jews “will
approach the coming election with a trepidation they have
rarely known before.” The Guardian also featured a letter
from opponents of Corbyn proclaiming that they would
not vote for Labour in the December 12 general election
because his leadership had made the party anti-Semitic.

The signatories included Eurosceptic Conservative
author Frederick Forsyth, self-identified “Tory scum”
Tony Parsons, the actress Joanna Lumley, Tory
businessman Ghanem Nuseibeh, who chairs Muslims
Against anti-Semitism, and Maajid Nawaz, the founding
chair of Quilliam, a think tank with intimate connections
to the state.

All claims that Labour is an anti-Semitic party are filthy
lies. The 2016 Chakrabarti Inquiry found “no evidence”
of systemic anti-Semitism in Labour, while a cross party
parliamentary Select Committee in 2016 concluded that
“there exists no reliable, empirical evidence to support
the notion that there is a higher prevalence of anti-Semitic
attitudes within the Labour Party than any other political
party.” Incidents of anti-Semitism within Labour account
for 0.08 percent of its membership of around 500,000
people, one-third the rate in the general population.

More generally, a detailed study of attitudes towards
Jews and Israel in Britain by the Institute for Jewish
Policy Research found that the levels of anti-Semitism
were among the lowest in the world, with just 2.4 percent
expressing multiple anti-Semitic attitudes. This contrasts
to some 70 percent having a favourable opinion of Jews.
It added that only 17 percent had a favourable opinion
of Israel, with 33 percent holding an unfavourable view.

The Economist published a survey last month finding
that the “very left wing” were the least likely to hold
anti-Semitic views, while holding by far the most critical
views of Israel. Most people made a clear distinction
between Israel and Jews, and did not hold Jews
responsible for the crimes committed by successive
Israeli governments. In contrast, both the “right” and the
“centre” tended to conflate Israel and the Jewish people.

Aside from a tiny number of fringe figures, those who
are being targeted and accused of anti-Semitism within
the Labour Party are anti-Zionists. As the Al Jazeera film
The Lobby revealed, the Israeli embassy in London
funded a campaign managed by the Labour Friends of
Israel to undermine Corbyn because of his longstanding
support for Palestinian rights. To this end, the Zionist
lobby sought to brand any opposition to Israeli Prime
Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s far right government and
its oppression of the Palestinians as anti-Semitism.

Accusations that Corbyn is an anti-Semite and that
Labour under his leadership is a threat to Jews must be
unconditionally opposed. But those responsible could
mount this filthy campaign only because of Corbyn’s
refusal to mobilise the hundreds of thousands who joined
the Labour Party based on his pledge to oppose austerity
and militarism against the Blairite right wing.

Instead, faced with slanderous attacks on key allies such
as Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth, Jackie Walker and
Chris Williamson, Corbyn accepted the International
Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of
anti-Semitism, which declares calling Israel a “racist
culture” to be anti-Semitic, and then threw his allies to
the wolves. From that moment on, opposing the Zionist
slanders became impossible under Corbyn’s leadership.

In his BBC interview with Andrew Neil, Corbyn
squirmed pathetically while accepting that the chief
rabbis—a fanatical Zionist who has described the
anti-Muslim racist Boris Johnson as a “longstanding
friend”—speaks for the “Jewish community.”

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