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Labour antisemitism row: adopt standard definition and end infighting, says GMB

Tuesday 14 August 2018, by [ELGOT Jessica](#) (Date first published: 9 August 2018).

Union's chief says party is 'knocking lumps out of each other' when it should be exploiting Tory divisions

The leader of one of the UK's largest trade unions has urged [Jeremy Corbyn](#) and the Labour party to finally adopt an international antisemitism definition and end infighting.

Tim Roache, general secretary of the GMB union, said the party was "knocking lumps out of each other" when it should be exploiting divisions in the Tory party.

"Antisemitism is [a problem in the Labour party](#). I've been shocked at what I've seen on social media," [he wrote in a blog for HuffPost](#). "For my entire life, and with every fibre of my being, I have campaigned against and fought racism."

Roache, whose union is the third largest in the UK with representatives on Labour's ruling national executive committee (NEC), said Labour should fully adopt the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) definition of antisemitism](#) and all its examples.

Four of the examples are currently omitted from the new code of conduct adopted by the party last month, which caused widespread anger from Jewish communal organisations who have said trust can only be rebuilt once the definition is accepted unamended.

"It is abundantly clear that [Labour](#) has to accept IHRA examples of antisemitism in full, while agreeing that criticising the Israeli government and supporting our Palestinian brothers and sisters is not being antisemitic," Roache wrote.

"As one MP told me, 'criticise the Israeli government, but let's do it without being a racist and without being an arse.' Surely, as a movement, that low bar cannot be beyond our ability?"

Labour has argued the missing IHRA examples are already covered in the rest of the wider code, including claiming that British Jews have dual loyalties and comparing Israeli actions with those of the Nazis.

However, the leadership may yet be prepared to accept three of the four missing examples, but an impasse remains over a fourth - "claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour", because of concerns about hindering legitimate criticism of Israel's creation.

There remain [deep divisions in the NEC](#) over whether to adapt the code to incorporate all the IHRA examples. Influential trade union members, including from both GMB and Unison, have spoken in favour of adopting the definitions. Momentum founder Jon Lansman is also understood to now be pushing for Labour to end the row.

Labour MPs may be able to force the issue ahead of the party conference in September. MPs are set to vote on 5 September on adopting the full definition into their own parliamentary rules, a major challenge to Corbyn's authority should he not decide to make the change himself.

In his article, Roache also took aim at Labour MPs ruminating a split from the party, as well as social media activists attacking them.

"Some MPs need to get over themselves - being elected as a Labour MP is just that," he said. "To anyone who believes keeping Jeremy out of Number 10 or getting rid of him is worth another five years of a Tory government, think again.

"If we put as much energy into transforming our communities as people seem to put into debates about mandatory reselection, internal rows or #resignwatson, then maybe we would be further ahead in the polls - which is where we should be. We shouldn't be neck and neck; we should be miles ahead."

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The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/09/labour-antisemitism-row-adopt-standard-definition-and-end-infighting-says-gmb>