

# Open letter to Rebecca Long-Bailey: We call on you to reject the BoD's 10 Pledges!

*Dear Rebecca*

We address this letter to you, because, unlike Keir Starmer, you state that you intend to “stay true” to Jeremy Corbyn’s “radical socialist vision”.

The Board of Deputies (BoD) is not the representative body for the majority of Jews in Britain, many of whom are very critical of the actions of the state of Israel - unlike the BoD. The BoD is a pro-Israel organisation. It claims, for instance, that the Palestinians in Gaza are “using its civilians - including children - as pawns” in their fight against Israeli occupation and oppression.

The BoD have supported every war, every attack launched by Israel. The BoD is not a neutral body, but one with an evident political agenda: to attack, weaken and destroy any opposition to the systematic and brutal oppression of the Palestinians by the Israeli government. The BoD encourages the conflation of criticism of the Israeli government (anti-Zionism), with antisemitism (hatred of Jews).

The BoD, and its individual officers, have maintained open hostility to Labour since Corbyn took leadership of the party. They organised the ‘Enough is Enough’ demonstration outside parliament in March 2018, which was clearly aimed at weakening and attacking Jeremy Corbyn.

We believe that the BoD’s ‘10 Pledges’ are an outrageous political interference by an organisation that is overtly hostile to today’s Labour Party and everything it stands for. If implemented, these policies would for example, result in the suspensions and expulsions of the thousands of Labour members who have stood in open solidarity with those wrongly accused of antisemitism, in-

cluding Chris Williamson, Jackie Walker, Ken Livingstone and Marc Wadsworth.

Solidarity is surely what the Labour Party stands for? If implemented, the pledges would create an atmosphere of fear, distrust and self-censorship. Is that really the kind of party you want Labour to become?

Also, it is not for the leader of the Labour Party, or candidates aspiring to be the leader, to commit themselves to such pledges. The policies and rules of the Labour Party are determined by the members of the party via annual conference. By agreeing to these pledges, you are at risk of undermining our democratic processes.

We believe you are on a dangerous path. Please turn around while you still can. We ask you to reject the ‘10 pledges’ and stand with us - for the democratic transformation of the Labour Party into a vehicle for positive change, free speech and open debate.

**We reject all of the ‘10 pledges’, in particular:**

**Pledge 2:** This pledge calls for the disciplinary process to be run by an “independent provider”. No, Labour party members should be judged by their peers only, not by outside agencies with their own political agenda.

**Pledge 3:** This would hand over confidential details of ongoing disciplinary cases to “Jewish representative bodies”. Which “bodies”? Of course the BoD chiefly mean themselves, because in pledge 8 they reject any engagement with what they call “fringe organisations and individuals”, by which they include principled, non-Zionist organisations like Jewish Voice for Labour.

**Pledge 4:** This would impose a lifetime ban from membership for what the BoD refers to as “repeat offenders, such as Ken Livingstone or Jackie Walker.” However, Ken Livingstone resigned his membership; whereas Jackie was not found guilty of antisemitism, but “bringing the party into disrepute”. Clearly, neither of them has said or done anything antisemitic (defined as “hatred of Jews”). Not only is this crass harassment of two individuals who have fought against racism for their entire life, it allows an anti-Labour organisation to decide who should or should not be a member of our party.

**Pledge 5:** This states: “Any MPs, peers, councillors, members or CLPs who support, campaign or provide a platform for people who have been suspended or expelled in the wake of antisemitic incidents should themselves be suspended from membership.” This is gross censorship, which should be rejected by anybody who wants a critical, engaged and thinking membership. This pledge would make it impossible for members to campaign to right a wrong in the party; it could lead to the suspension and smearing of thousands of members who dare to question and criticise what they may perceive to be wrong decisions.

**Pledge 6:** The Labour Party’s NEC has already adopted the IHRA’s ‘definition’ of antisemitism with all its eleven examples, even though some of those conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Making this “the basis for considering antisemitism disciplinary cases” is yet another insidious attack on free speech – exactly what the definition’s author, Kenneth Stern, has been warning about.

**Pledge 7:** This pledge seeks to hand the deliverance of “anti-racism training” to the Jew-

ish Labour Movement, a pro-Zionist organisation that was revived in 2015 with the specific aim of undermining and attacking Jeremy Corbyn and the left. JLM (whose members don’t have to be Jewish or Labour Party members) have been instrumental in exaggerating and weaponising the very small number of antisemitic incidents in the Labour movement in order to smear Jeremy Corbyn and the left, by wilfully conflating anti-Zionism with Antisemitism.

We call on all on all socialists, anti-imperialists and Corbyn supporters to stay actively involved in the Labour Party and join us in this campaign against the BoD’s ‘10 Pledges’ and the ongoing witch-hunt against the left in the Labour movement.

Signatories include (all personal capacity):

**Moshé Machover**, author  
**Leah Levane**, Jewish Voice for Labour  
**Alexei Sayle**, comedian  
**Jackie Walker**, author  
**Glyn Secker**, Jewish Voice for Labour  
Cllr **Jo Bird**, Wirral  
**Asa Winstanley**, journalist  
**Roland Rance**, Free Speech on Israel  
Cllr **Sam Gorst**, Liverpool  
**Mike Cushman**, Jewish Voice for Labour  
**Kevin Higgins**, poet  
**Graham Bash**, LRC,JVL, LAW  
**John Dunn**, Orgreave Campaign  
**Tina Werkmann**, vice-chair Labour Against the Witchhunt  
**Lee Rock**, convenor Sheffield Labour Left  
Cllr **Pam Bromley**, Rossendale and Carven

Organisations in support:

Labour Against the Witchhunt, Labour Left Alliance, Sheffield Labour Left, Cheltenham Labour Left, Bassetlaw Socialist Forum, York Labour Representation Committee & others

**LAW is one of the organisations behind the Labour Left Alliance. Please sign up to their Appeal - and get involved in (re-)building the Labour Left where you live! Sign up here: [www.labourleft.org](http://www.labourleft.org)**



**Labour Against the Witchhunt**

Tel: 07817 379 568

BCM Box 1488, London WC1N 3XX

[info@labouragainsthewitchhunt.org](mailto:info@labouragainsthewitchhunt.org)

[www.labouragainsthewitchhunt.org](http://www.labouragainsthewitchhunt.org)