**OXFORD & DISTRICT LABOUR PARTY**

Secretary

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**To: Members of the Oxford & District Labour Party**

You are invited to a meeting of the Oxford & District Labour Party on **Thursday 14 June 2018** at the **Abingdon United Football Club, Northcourt Road, Abingdon OX14 1PL** – full directions attached. Please arrive from 7:15 p.m. so we can start promptly at 7:30 p.m.

Amendments to motions must be sent to me at least 48 hours before the meeting. Please note (a) no further amendments will be accepted to motion 11.1 on anti-semitism, as this incorporates the five amendments submitted in May (b) amendments to other motions should specify the words to be inserted, deleted or replaced (c) simple amendments are easier to accommodate in a structured debate.

All members are welcome to attend, speak and vote on all policy issues including resolutions. I hope to see you there.

Ann Black, Secretary

**AGENDA**

*7:30* 1. Attendance, apologies and welcome

*7:31* 2. Agreement of agenda and timings

*7:33* 3. Minutes of the all-member meeting on 10 May 2018, attached.

*7:35* 4. Matters arising.

1. **10 Party democracy review**. The results of the discussion at Appendix A have been submitted to the review.
2. **11 Trans women and all-women shortlists**. The motion has been sent to the general secretary for the attention of the NEC.

*7:37* 5. Urgent business, including any other business.

*7:40* 6. **Labour's Road to Electoral Reform - how close are we today?** with guest speaker **Mary Southcott**.

Mary has been the Parliamentary and Political Officer of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform (LCER) since 1989, just before Labour set up the Plant Commission, and stood as a parliamentary candidate in 1987.  She has been secretary, vice-chair and women's officer of her local party, served on the National Policy Forum from 1993, co-wrote the book *Making Votes Count* with Martin Linton as a contribution to the Jenkins Commission in 1998, and briefed Robin Cook from 1997 to 2005. In the 2015 general election she helped to relaunch LCER joined by many other Labour activists.

*8:25* 7. Motion on electoral reform proposed by North & St Margaret’s branch

“This meeting believes that our archaic electoral system is antidemocratic and not fit for purpose. We need a properly representative and transparent electoral system where no vote is wasted. We need to change to a form of proportional representation for national elections. This should be one which allows M.P.s to keep their local constituency link. The voting age should be lowered to 16. Voting at weekends and the possibility of electronic voting should be investigated.

This meeting calls upon the Labour Party to reject First Past the Post, the current voting system for General Elections, and to launch a consultation to choose a new voting system in which seats will broadly reflect the votes cast.

This meeting also calls on the Labour Party to include proposals for reform in the Party's manifesto for the next general election, with the declared intent that the new electoral changes will be put in place for the following general election.”

*8:40* 8. Fundraising collection

*8:40* 9. Parliamentary report. Anneliese Dodds MP.

*9:00* 10. Oxford city council report. To note that there will be a by-election in Headington in July, and Simon Ottino has been endorsed as the Labour candidate.

*9:05* 11. Motions

11.1 **Anti-semitism** proposed by the Rose Hill, Iffley & Littlemore branch incorporating various amendments from Rob Lemkin, Michael March, Stephen Marks, Simon Ottino,

This meeting notes

1. Jeremy Corbyn’s acknowledgement of the anti-semitic content of the East London mural, and his regret in opposing the removal of the mural in 2012

2. The subsequent press statement about anti-semitism in the Labour Party from the Jewish Board of Deputies to Jeremy Corbyn

3. Jeremy Corbyn’s letter of response to the BOD (Appendix 1) in which he acknowledges that forms of anti-semitism do exist in the Labour Party and the Labour Movement

4. While the BOD has been critical of Jeremy Corbyn over this issue other Jewish organisations such as Jewdas and Jewish Voice for Labour have been more supportive.

This meeting believes

1. That anti semitism does exist in the Labour Party, but more widely there is a lack of understanding about what it looks like

2. That anti-semitism is usually not expressed in the form of explicit Jew-hatred or racism, but can manifest in a number of different forms such as:

- Political formulations that blur the clear distinction between criticism of Israel on the one hand, and anti-Semitism on the other; as per the examples specified in Jeremy Corbyn’s letter to the Board of Deputies (paragraph 8):

- Conspiracy theories – such as the Rothschild’s conspiracy – which portray world affairs as being covertly controlled by traditionally Jewish bankers and financiers.

- Similarly conspiratorial political formulas in which “Israel” or a “Zionist lobby” or “Zionists” are expressed as an all-encompassing and uniquely evil global power

“Criticism of Israel, particularly in relation to the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people, cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, comparing Israel or the actions of Israeli governments to the Nazis, attributing criticisms of Israel to Jewish characteristics or to Jewish people in general and using abusive phraseology about supporters of Israel such as "Zio" all constitute aspects of contemporary anti-Semitism. And Jewish people must not be held responsible or accountable for the actions of the Israeli government.”

3. That these forms of anti-semitism exist in the party are a reflection of the level of debate in wider society, and should be primarily combatted through raising the level of political education and debate on these issues inside the party

4. That disputes over anti-Semitism should be resolved through education and mediation in the first instance and should only be resolved by expulsions as a last resort.

5. Allegations of anti-semitism should be taken seriously, and all parts of the diverse Jewish community should be respectfully engaged with, whatever their political views.

6. Our commitment as a party to eliminating anti-semitism in its various forms is no more or less important than our commitment to eliminating all other forms of bigotry and racism.

This meeting resolves

- To support Jeremy Corbyn’s letter of reply to the Board of Deputies (Appendix 1)

- To endorse the the idea of a wider educational programme on the subject of anti-semitism as part of an increase in the resourcing of educational efforts on all forms of racism and bigotry.

*Appendix 1: Jeremy Corbyn’s letter to the Board of Deputies*

*Thank you for your letter to the Labour Party concerning anti-Semitism issued as a press statement last night.*

*First of all, let me acknowledge the anger and upset that provoked it, and repeat my offer of an urgent meeting to discuss the issues you have raised as soon as possible.*

*I stated yesterday, and repeat today, that I will not tolerate any form of anti-Semitism that exists in or around our party and movement. I am committed to eliminating anti-Semitism wherever it exists.*

*As I told the Labour Party conference in 2016, anti-Semitism is an evil that led to the worst crimes of the 20th century. Prejudice and hatred of Jewish people has no place whatsoever in the Labour Party, and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure it is never allowed to fester in our society again.*

*I recognise that anti-Semitism has surfaced within the Labour Party, and has too often been dismissed as simply a matter of a few bad apples. This has caused pain and hurt to Jewish members of our Party and to the wider Jewish community in Britain. I am sincerely sorry for the pain which has been caused, and pledge to redouble my efforts to bring this anxiety to an end.*

*While the forms of anti-Semitism expressed on the far Right of politics are easily detectable, such as Holocaust denial, there needs to be a deeper understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism in the labour movement. Sometimes this evil takes familiar forms - the east London mural which has caused such understandable controversy is an example. The idea of Jewish bankers and capitalists exploiting the workers of the world is an old anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. This was long ago, and rightly, described as "the socialism of fools".*

*I am sorry for not having studied the content of the mural more closely before wrongly questioning its removal in 2012.*

*Newer forms of anti-Semitism have been woven into criticism of Israeli governments. Criticism of Israel, particularly in relation to the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people, cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, comparing Israel or the actions of Israeli governments to the Nazis, attributing criticisms of Israel to Jewish characteristics or to Jewish people in general and using abusive phraseology about supporters of Israel such as "Zio" all constitute aspects of contemporary anti-Semitism. And Jewish people must not be held responsible or accountable for the actions of the Israeli government.*

*The Labour Party has always opposed anti-Semitism, old and new, and always will. We are proud of our deep historical links with Jewish communities, and to have fought alongside generations of Jewish men and women against fascism, prejudice and discrimination. This is a part of our common heritage from which we will never be separated. But I acknowledge that anti-Semitic attitudes have surfaced more often in our ranks in recent years, and that the Party has been too slow in processing some of the cases that have emerged. Early action has nevertheless been taken, and we will work to speed up procedures, to deal with cases of anti-Semitic abuse or attitudes.*

*I am committed to making our Party a welcoming and secure place for Jewish people. Zero tolerance for anti-Semites means what it says, and the Party will proceed in that spirit. That demands among other things the overdue full implementation of the recommendations of the Chakrabarti report, including a programme of political education to increase awareness and understanding of all forms of anti-Semitism.*

*The battle against anti-Semitism should never become a party political issue. It must unite all of us if we are both to honour the memory of the victims of the bestial crimes of the 20th century and build a future of equality and justice for all.*

*In that spirit, I must make it clear that I will never be anything other than a militant opponent of anti-Semitism. In this fight, I am your ally and always will be.*

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11.2 **Gaza** proposed by the South West Central branch

This meeting is appalled at the massacre of over one hundred Palestinian protesters in Gaza, and the wounding of thousands by Israeli snipers using live fire and expanding bullets.

The numbers of unarmed people killed during six weeks of protest, including children and journalists, is now over 100.

This is more than the numbers killed and wounded in the notorious Sharpeville massacre of unarmed protesters in 1960, which started South Africa’s slide into pariah status.

Palestinians were protesting the provocative decision by the US government to mark the 70th anniversary of the Nakba – the uprooting of the Palestinian people as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 – by moving its embassy to illegally-occupied Jerusalem.

We condemn the attempts of Israel and its supporters to place the blame on Hamas and away from the Israeli soldiers who carried out the shooting and their commanders. It compounds murder with the insult of denying the agency of Gazans driven to risk death by the nature of the Israeli siege and the wrecking of their lives.

We believe that these protesters – many of them refugees from areas now inside the state of Israel – have the right to return to their homes and lands. We call for an immediate end to the slaughter, for Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied territories, for an end to all discrimination inside Israel, and for progress towards a just and peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis.

We also thank the Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry for her outspoken condemnation of the Israeli action. Like her we support the UN General Secretary’s call for an independent investigation into these incidents, to determine whether international law has been broken, and hold the Netanyahu government to account for its actions.

We also support her call to “…stop this vicious and utterly avoidable slaughter of peaceful protesters demanding the right to return to their homes” and for “…urgent and concerted international pressure on the Netanyahu government and Egypt to lift the blockade on Gaza, and end Israel’s illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories”.

11.3 **Israeli Army's unlawful killing and maiming of Palestinian protesters** proposed by the East Oxford branch

This meeting notes:

* Since 30 March, tens of thousands of Palestinians have engaged in mass and overwhelmingly nonviolent protests in the Gaza Strip.
* The Government of Israel has responded with heavy repression. As of 19 May 2018, well over 100 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces during the demonstrations. The death toll following a single day - 14 May when protesters mobilised against the U.S. embassy move to Jerusalem - has so far reached 64. Still more protestors are critical conditions, battling for their lives.
* Médecins Sans Frontières doctors in Gaza have reported 'receiving patients with devastating injuries of an unusual severity' while Amnesty International has observed that many injuries 'bear the hallmarks of US-manufactured M24 Reminton sniper rifles shooting 7.62mm hunting ammunition, which expand and mushroom inside the body.'
* One Israeli soldier has been reported injured.
* B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, has found that 'Israeli soldiers have been shooting at unarmed demonstrators who pose no danger . . . An order to open live fire at unarmed civilians is manifestly illegal'.
* Amnesty International has renewed its call on governments worldwide to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel following the country's illegal response to the mass demonstrations.
* The nonviolent demonstrations have occurred in the context of Israel's illegal siege of Gaza, which the United Nations warns risks making Gaza literally 'unliveable' by 2020.
* The European Parliament in April 2018 overwhelmingly demanded 'an immediate and unconditional end of the blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip'.
* Labour MP Richard Burden has sponsored an Early Day Motion affirming the right to peaceful protest by Palestinians, calling for an investigation into the killings of Palestinians, and noting the destructive effects of the Israeli siege, notably for Gaza's health system and its ability to cope with the mass casualties.
* Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has condemned Israel's 'slaughter' of 'unarmed protestors' as an 'outrage', called for 'an end to the . . . siege of Gaza' and stressed Labour's commitment to 'reviewing UK arms sales to Israel while these violations continue'.
* Shadow Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Emily Thornberry has condemned Israel's 'vicious and utterly avoidable slaughter' and called for 'urgent and concerted international pressure' on Israel to 'lift the blockade on Gaza' and 'end Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories'.
* The United Kingdom issued export licenses for £216 million worth of arms to Israel in 2017, including sale of sniper rifles, the sort of weapons that have been used to kill Palestinian protesters in past weeks.

This meeting believes:

* Palestinians' right to protest peacefully has been grossly violated.
* We must condemn in the strongest possible terms the use by the armed forces of the State of Israel of lethal force against peaceful protesters as well as Israel's illegal, immoral and inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip.
* Amnesty International is right to warn that: 'The time for symbolic statements of condemnation is now over. The international community must act concretely and stop the delivery of arms and military equipment to Israel. A failure to do so will continue to fuel serious human rights abuses against thousands of men, women and children suffering the consequences of life under Israel's cruel blockade of Gaza.'
* B'Tselem is right to call on the international community to 'do all in its power-and its responsibility-in order to protect Palestinian lives and uphold international norms'.

This meeting resolves to call on Oxford East MP Anneliese Dodds and the Parliamentary Labour Party to:

* Call for an immediate and unconditional end to the illegal blockade and closure of Gaza
* Call for an independent international investigation into Israel's use of force against Palestinian demonstrators
* Call on the UK Government:
  + - To suspend all current arms sales to Israel
    - To support international efforts to agree a comprehensive arms embargo to all parties of the conflict
    - To apply the same criteria in licensing components for export as it applies to complete weapon systems, that is scrap guidelines (2002) specific to the export of arms components especially to items destined for incorporation into weapons systems made by foreign manufacturers, to close a loophole which could allow UK components to contribute to the suffering of the Palestinian people and other civilians in other areas of conflict.

*9:27* 12. Executive committee report. The minutes of the meetings on 16 March 2018 and 30 March 2018 are attached.

*9:28* 13. NEC reports. Reports by local NEC members Ann Black and Peter Willsman are attached.

*9:29* 14. Future meetings. **Friday 13 July** (St Clements family centre, campaigning on the living wage), **Thursday 6 September** (Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, conference motions and speaker from Oxford co-housing), **Friday 12 October 2018** (Rose Hill community centre, conference reports and member Jamie Tarlton on Palestine, venue to be arranged), **Friday 9 November 2018** (Dr Dougal Hargreaves on child poverty and health, venue to be arranged), **Thursday 13 / Friday 14 December 2018** (short meeting with refreshments, venue to be arranged)

*The following additional motion was proposed by the South West Central branch. Under standing orders, branches are entitled to have one motion on the agenda for each meeting. The branch prioritised their motion on Gaza, and this second motion will be debated only if time permits and with the consent of the meeting. Otherwise it will be carried forward to the July meeting.*

15. **National Policy Forum**

This meeting notes that:

• According to the party rule book, the National Policy Forum (NPF) is meant to provide a

“rolling programme of work” from which Conference adopts paty policy.

• The NPF brings together representatives of members, unions, socialist societies, and elected

officials to develop detailed policy for implementation once Labour is in government.

• The workings of the NPF are largely opaque to grassroots members, who are offered little

opportunity to become involved and to whom minutes of meetings are not made available.

• In March of this year the NPF began its annual consultation of members by releasing 8

reports asking a series of questions to which members could respond.

• These questions were broad and gave members insufficient background information on the

issues or potential solutions to be able to foster informed discussion.

• In previous years, member responses to the consultation have been ignored when they do

not fit the NPF’s agenda and the reports it submits to Conference contain few, if any,

concrete policies.

• As a result, party manifestos tend to be written by a small group around the leadership and

do not necessarily resemble the work of the NPF

• While Jeremy Corbyn was elected on the promise to open policy formation up to members,

the same dysfunctional process has persisted.

We therefore call on the National Policy Forum to:

• Organise a series of local consultation events throughout the year at which both experts and

party members are invited to discuss policy issues

• Release transcripts and/or video of these events, along with minutes of other NPF meetings,

to be made available online.

• Direct its members to actively engage with submissions made through the NPF website.

This might take the form of, e.g., asking authors for further information, facilitating

cooperation of like-minded authors, and promoting dialogue between conflicting views.

• Inform those who make policy submissions what the NPF choses to do with them (e.g., if

they are to be used or, if not, why so)

• Ensure that annual reports address the full range of submissions which have been received.

• Ensure that the shadow ministerial teams use the NPF process to develop and promote policy.

• Use annual reports to synthesise the policy put forward by members and experts into a form

which could be implemented in government.

• Where conflicting views exist on the Forum, release minority reports which Conference may

also consider.