

## Why I do not believe that Peter Gregson is an anti-Semite and why the allegations against him should be dismissed

*Tony Greenstein*

I am submitting this statement on behalf of Peter Gregson, a shop steward in the GMB who I first met at the Labour Party conference last September. I do not accept that Peter is, as is alleged, an anti-Semite.

### The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Anti-Semitism

The case against Peter Gregson is based upon the [IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism](#) which was recently adopted by the Labour Party after a massive campaign from elements hostile to the Party, including the [racist Tory press](#).

The IHRA itself is an inter-government alliance of some 31 states, including Poland and Hungary, both of which have anti-Semitic governments. Both Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary and Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland are fully signed up to the IHRA as well as being closely aligned politically to the Israeli state and its Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Morawiecki is on [record](#) as saying the Jews ‘*share the blame for the Holocaust*.’ Orban has described the war-time pro-Nazi ruler of Hungary, Admiral Horthy as an ‘[exceptional statesman](#).’ This exceptional statesman presided over the deportation of 437,000 Jews to Auschwitz. This didn’t however stop Orban visiting Israel in July repaying a visit of Netanyahu to Hungary. Both Orban and Netanyahu, together with Donald Trump, share a [common enemy](#) in George Soros, the Jewish billionaire who is a childhood survivor of the Holocaust.

The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism was originally called the EUMC Working Definition of Anti-Semitism when it was drawn up in 2005. It is still called a Working Definition. It was explicitly drawn up as a means of conflating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. That much is admitted by the person who wrote it, Kenneth Stern.

The definition is 38 words

**“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”**

This is not a definition. It is open ended. What is ‘*a certain perception*’? Whose perception? The victim, the perpetrator, the reasonable bystander? If anti-Semitism ‘*may be expressed as anti-Semitism*’ what else may it be expressed as? Anti-Zionism? And why does it define anti-Semitism as hatred? If someone tells me that they don’t wish their children to go to school with Jews ‘*but they don’t hate Jews*’ then according to the IHRA they are not anti-Semitic.

There is a very simple definition of anti-Semitism in the [Oxford English dictionary](#). It consists of just 6 words as opposed to the IHRA’s 500+ words. ‘*Hostility to or prejudice against Jews*’. The IHRA has been savaged by academics and legal scholars alike. The obvious question is why is there a need to define anti-Semitism? Ask the man or woman on

the Clapham Omnibus what is anti-Semitism and they will say it is 'someone who doesn't like Jews.'

If you want a more sophisticated definition of anti-Semitism then there is that of Oxford academic Dr Brian Klug, an expert in anti-Semitism. In his [2013 lecture](#) to the Jewish Museum in Berlin '*What Do We Mean When We Say 'Antisemitism'? Echoes of shattering glass*' given on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kristallnacht, Klug suggested the following definition:

*'antisemitism is a form of hostility to Jews as Jews, where Jews are perceived as something other than what they are'* or more succinctly *'hostility to Jews as not Jews'* because the Jew that anti-Semites hate is not a real person but a mythical creature.

Critics of the IHRA include **Professor David Feldman**, who was Vice-Chair of the Chakrabarti Inquiry and is Director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism. Feldman [described](#) the definition as '[bewilderingly imprecise](#).'

**Sir Stephen Sedley**, who is Jewish and was a Judge in the Court of Appeal wrote in [Defining Anti-Semitism](#) that the IHRA '*fails the first test of any definition: it is indefinite*.' In what is the most concise critique of the IHRA, Sedley wrote that:

the IHRA definition offers encouragement to pro-Israel militants whose targets for abuse and disruption in London have recently included the leading American scholar and critic of Israel Richard Falk, and discouragement to university authorities which do not want to act as censors but worry that the IHRA definition requires them to do so.

In a passage of some relevance to the charges against Peter Gregson, Sedley commented specifically upon one of the illustration of anti-Semitism:

Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour.

Sedley said that this example '

bristles with contentious assumptions about the racial identity of Jews, assumptions contested by many diaspora Jews but on which both Zionism and anti-Semitism fasten, and about Israel as the embodiment of a collective right of Jews to self-determination.'

Sedley described the problem of the IHRA was that it only allowed

'such criticism as can be made of other states, placing the historical, political, military and humanitarian uniqueness of Israel's occupation and colonisation of Palestine beyond permissible criticism.

**Hugh Tomlinson QC** in an [Opinion](#) declared, as have all other lawyers, that the IHRA had

a potential chilling effect on public bodies which, in the absence of definitional clarity, may seek to sanction or prohibit any conduct which has been labelled by third parties as antisemitic without applying any clear criterion of assessment.

**Geoffrey Robertson QC**, a renowned human rights lawyer [described](#) the IHRA as

likely to chill criticism of action by the Government of Israel and advocacy of sanctions as a means to deter human rights abuses in Gaza and elsewhere.

He also found that when it comes to **genuine** anti-Semitism, the IHRA is very weak.

By pivoting upon racial hatred ... it fails to catch those who exhibit hostility and prejudice – or apply discrimination – against Jewish people for no reason other than that they are Jewish.

Even the principal author of the IHRA, Kenneth Stern, acknowledged that the IHRA was being used in ways that were never intended, as a means of chilling free speech. In [testimony](#) to the House of Representatives in November 2017, he warned that:

The definition was not drafted, and was never intended, as a tool to target or chill speech on a college campus. In fact, at a conference in 2010 about the impact of the definition, I highlighted this misuse, and the damage it could do.

Stern [spoke](#) about how the IHRA was ‘*was being employed in an attempt to restrict academic freedom and punish political speech*’. Stern asked a question particularly relevant to the current debate.

‘Imagine a definition designed for Palestinians. If “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, and denying Israel the right to exist” is antisemitism, then shouldn’t “Denying the Palestinian people their right to self-determination, and denying Palestine the right to exist” be anti-Palestinianism?’

Stern described how the IHRA had been used to curtail free speech in Britain, listing the “Israel Apartheid Week” event which was cancelled by Central Lancashire University and the case of the Holocaust survivor who was required to change the title of a campus talk by Manchester university *after an Israeli diplomat complained that the title violated the definition.* Stern described as ‘*Perhaps most egregious*’ of all the call on a university to conduct an inquiry of Professor Rebecca Gould for ‘antisemitism’, based on an article she had written years before. Accurately describing what had happened as ‘*chilling and McCarthy-like*.’ Professor Gould’s description of what happened is on [Open Democracy](#).

## The Specific Allegations Against Peter Gregson

1. It is alleged, in Gary Smith’s letter of 6<sup>th</sup> November that Peter ‘*posted or distributed materials on social media that are of an anti-Semitic nature.*’ It was alleged that Gregson published material that ‘*deemed Jews to be collectively responsible for the actions of the State of Israel.*’ No examples are given of this but if indeed Gregson did post such material then it would be anti-Semitic. One of the examples of anti-Semitism in the IHRA is:

***Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.***

2. But then Gary Smith, without even the slightest recognition of the contradiction, accuses Gregson of ‘anti-Semitism’ in the same letter because he infringes another illustration of ‘anti-Semitism’:

**Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.**

Gary Smith didn’t seem to recognize, still less understand, the contradiction. The illustration is a non-sequitur. You can support the right of Jews to self-determination and still see Israel

as a racist state (the term endeavour is a good example of the incoherence of the sentence. How can the existence of something be an endeavour?

The right to self-determination is something that nations are entitled to claim. What this clause is saying is that Jews are a separate nation. If so then I am an alien. Jews do not belong in Britain. You can't be a member of 2 nations simultaneously. This was precisely why historically it was Jews above all who opposed Zionism and anti-Semites who welcomed it.

When Avi Gabbay, leader of the racist Israeli Labour Party [declared](#), after the recent murder of 11 Jews at Pittsburgh, that American Jews should leave American and go to their 'real home' Israel, he was arguing that Jews should do what the anti-Semites wanted them to do, which is for them to leave the United States.

Jews are members of all nations. They are defined by their religion, not their race or nation as the Zionists assert. But if Jews are a single nation, of which Israel is the nation state, then it is quite reasonable to blame all Jews for what Israel does. Just as it is reasonable to blame British people for Britain's participation in the Iraq War.

This is why the IHRA, in its attempt to equate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism ends up as an ill-thought out, incoherent and contradictory statement.

3. Peter is also accused of having *'initiated, supported or shared an online petition declaring the State of Israel to be a racist endeavour.'* Is it seriously doubted that Israel is a racist ethno-nationalist state?

Has Gary Smith or the GMB ever wondered why it is the far-Right who, today, love the Israeli state even when, at the same time, they are not too fond of Jews?

The best example of this is Donald Trump himself. There is no more ardent a supporter of Israel than Donald Trump, yet he is undoubtedly an anti-Semite. [[Anti-Semitism is no longer an undertone of Trump's campaign. It's the melody](#) and [Trump's America is not a safe place for Jews](#)] But it's not only Trump. Steve Bannon, Trump's svengali, combines anti-Semitism with fervent Christian Zionism. He may not have wanted his children to [go to school with Jewish children](#) but he loves Israel. Richard Spencer, the neo-Nazi founder of the alt-Right describes himself as a [White Zionist](#). In Britain [Tommy Robinson](#) and [Britain First](#) combine support for Israel and Zionism with anti-Semitism.

- 3.4. One of the charges in the letter of 6.11.18. is that Peter Gregson *'actively oppose(s) IHRAs definitions of anti-Semitism'*. Perhaps that is because Peter supports the Palestinians, which is also apparently GMB policy. The proceedings against Peter Gregson shows a shocking contempt for freedom of speech and debate. How else do you change policy if you are not allowed to campaign for what you believe in? Is the GMB a police state? I know that historically it has been a right-wing trade union but I thought it was on the mend.

- 4.5. Peter is accused of contacting people outside the union about an internal investigation and publicising it. Apparently this was *'contrary to the best interests of the union.'* Is the union its members or an undemocratic and self-serving bureaucracy? Members of the GMB have no interest in a witch-hunt being conducted in silence. The obvious question is, what have you got to fear from publicity?

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~~5.6.~~ There is also an allegation, in an email from Gary Smith about an '*anti-Semitic attack on one of our employees.*' This refers to Rhea Wolfson, a GMB organiser who was also a member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee. I understand that Rhea was instrumental in having Peter suspended. Rhea is a member of the Jewish Labour Movement, which is an affiliate of the racist Israeli Labour Party which is in turn affiliated to the World Zionist Organisation, which funds Jewish settlements in the West Bank on stolen Palestinian land. In what way was Peter's criticisms anti-Semitic? Or is what Gary Smith saying that criticism of Jews per se is anti-Semitic (unless they happen to be the 'wrong sort of Jews' i.e. anti-Zionists?)

## Israel as a Racist State

~~6.7.~~ It is alleged that calling Israel a racist state (endeavour is a dishonest euphemism) is anti-Semitic. If this is true then what this means is that anti-Semitism is factually true. This is an interesting concept because I have always been brought up to believe, being Jewish, that anti-Semitism was based on myths and lies about Jewish World Conspiracies but Gary is saying that even if you tell the truth you can be anti-Semitic.

Let me give just some examples of why Israel is racist and why Zionism is a racist project.

- i. As a Jew I have the right to go to Israel and claim citizenship. Palestinian friends who are refugees have no such right because they are not Jews. If this is not racist then the word has lost all meaning.
- ii. In Israel proper, not the Occupation, Palestinian Israelis are resident aliens. For example half the Arab villages in Israel are 'unrecognised' and subject to demolition at any time. They receive neither water, sewerage, electricity or other facilities. Villages in the Negev, the desert area of Israel have been demolished solely because of a policy of Judaisation of the Negev. [Umm al-Hiran](#) was demolished in January 2017. In the process a school teacher was murdered by Police. The leader of the [Arab/Jewish Joint List](#) Ayman Odeh was injured when a rubber bullet was fired at him directly. The reason for the demolition was in order to build a Jewish only town, Hiran, in its place. The Negev is largely unoccupied. A new town could have been built alongside Umm al-Hiran but that would run counter to the Prawer Plan, which is to concentrate Arabs in shanty towns.
- iii. There is [systematic discrimination](#) against Arab Education in Israel. In Israel, like Apartheid South Africa, the education sector is segregated. Israeli schools receive, on average 3 times as much per capita. In addition Jewish students receive grants unlike Arab students, because grants are dependent on military service and only Jews serve in the Zionist army.
- iv. 93% of Israeli land is reserved for Jews via organisations such as the Jewish National Fund. Since 1948, despite a 10 fold increase in population there has not been one new Arab town or community created. There is chronic overcrowding in the Arab sector. Contrast this with the creation of hundreds of new Jewish communities. When the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in 2000, in the case of Kadan, that Arabs could not be refused access to Jewish communities, the Knesset, with the support of members of the Israeli Labour Party, passed the

[Reception Committees Act](#) which allowed Jewish communities to reject Arabs and also Black Ethiopian Jews.

- v. Most larger Jewish cities are Arab free. When an Arab managed to buy a house in the all-Jewish city of Afula in Northern Israel this summer there were [demonstrations](#) of hundreds of Israeli Jews for days on end. Where in Europe would you find an equivalent?
- vi. In Safed in 2011 the Chief Rabbi, Shmuel Eliyahu issued a religious edict banning the renting of apartments to Arabs. When criticised dozens of [Jews? Zionists? Israelis? Rabbis](#) supported him. To this day the edict continues. Eliyahu is, like all Rabbis, a state official with a salary paid for by the state. See [Safed Rabbi Boasts That anti-Arab Edict Worked](#)
- vii. Even in hospital wards, de facto segregation is the norm. When Israeli Jewish women give birth most hospitals have Jewish and Arab maternity wards so that Jewish women are not forced to share with Arab women. [In Israeli Maternity Wards, Jewish and Arab Segregation Is the Default](#)
- viii. It is difficult to think of an area of Israeli life that isn't subject to racial discrimination. It is no wonder that [a plurality](#) of Israeli Jews (48%) support the transfer i.e. physical expulsion of Israel's Arab citizens.
- ix. The latest proposal of the Israeli government is to introduce the death penalty for 'terrorism'. Perhaps GMB national officers will welcome the fact that this will [only be applied to Palestinians](#). Of course the legislation doesn't say this but only Military Courts in the Occupied West Bank will possess the power to sentence someone to death. In the West Bank there are two sets of laws. Military law applicable solely to the Palestinians and ordinary civil and criminal law applicable to the Jewish settlers.

Israel is a Jewish state, not in a cultural but an ethnic/racial sense. Mixed marriages are a social taboo in Israel whereas outside Israel over 50% of Jews marry non-Jews. It is government policy to oppose Jewish-Arab relationships and in 2016 a book which depicted a Jewish-Arab relationship was banned from the high school syllabus by the Education Ministry. [Novel about Jewish-Palestinian love affair is barred from Israeli curriculum](#)

Being Jewish in Israel is a racial/national category. That is why in Israel there is no Israeli nationality because Israel is seen as the nation state of Jews not a state of its own citizens.

Israel is a racist state based upon ethnic cleansing and colonisation. It could only become a Jewish state by expelling 85% of the Arabs in 1948. Today it is obsessed by the demographic question, how many Arabs are there compared to Jews. That is why Israel is a racist state and not a democratic state. It goes without saying that the Occupied Territories are run on Apartheid lines. For example there are Jewish only roads and separate legal systems. Even the check points, of which there are hundreds have separate gates for Jews and Arabs.

However Israel pre-1967 is also an Apartheid society, even if the racial discrimination is more hidden. If Peter Gregson is accused of 'anti-Semitism' for stating that Israel is a racist state/endeavour then one can only conclude that:

- i. The GMB is perfectly happy with a definition of anti-Semitism which protects an Apartheid state.
- ii. The GMB is betraying the traditions of the labour movement in Britain which historically has always opposed Apartheid. If this witchhunt of Peter continues, then it will not be him but his accusers who are guilty of racism..

Tony Greenstein