

Letter in support of Peter Gregson against allegations of antisemitism

It has come to my attention that Peter Gregson has been suspended from the Campaign for Socialism over alleged allegations of antisemitism. It is my understanding that these allegations were made following Peter Gregson's speaking out against the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

I fully support Peter Gregson's opposition to the IHRA as I believe the examples have more to do with silencing criticism of Israel than silencing anti-Semites. The comprehensive legal opinion of Justice Hugh Tomlinson QC is that the IHRA definition has "*...no legal status in the UK, and that any organisation adopting this definition places itself in grave danger of breaching its duty to preserve freedom of speech*".

In 2016 the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee conducted an investigation into "Antisemitism in the UK". In its Report, it considered definitions of antisemitism and concluded that "*We broadly accept the IHRA definition, but propose two additional clarifications to ensure that freedom of speech is maintained in the context of discourse about Israel and Palestine, without allowing antisemitism to permeate any debate*".

The clarifications are

- It is not anti-Semitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.
- It is not anti-Semitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government's policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent

Looking at some of the examples:

E.g. 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.

Asserting the right to self-determination does not give any group a right to suppress others. Palestinians also have rights, including the same right to self-determination and the right to protest at the injustices inflicted upon them in the name of Jewish self-determination. It is not anti-Semitic for them to do so, nor for anyone else to support them.

You don't have to believe that those who founded Israel were inspired by racism to recognise that racism has been an indisputable outcome of its creation, given the expulsion of around 750,000 Palestinians, followed by the many racist laws created by the Israeli State, latest count is 60.

It's not anti-Semitic to recognise that international law sees Israel in "*belligerent occupation*" of all Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 including all of East Jerusalem, sees all settlements as illegal, and all Palestinians under occupation as severely discriminated against.

E.g. 2. Applying double standards by requiring of it [Israel] a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

The unstated assumption in this statement is that Israel is a normal democracy, just like any other. There is extensive evidence of discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel who are notionally full and equal citizens. There are also around four million Palestinians whose fate is determined by Brutal Israeli Military control and occupation, they have no vote at all. This is hardly normal in a democracy. It is not anti-Semitic to call Israel to account for breaches of international law and human rights conventions.

35 prominent Israelis, including Jewish-history scholars and Israel Prize laureates, Warn against equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, they called for a distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel, "harsh as it may be," and anti-Semitism.

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-professors-warn-against-equating-anti-zionism-with-anti-semitism-1.6674309>

Their open letter advised against giving Israel immunity for 'grave and widespread violations of human rights and international law'. It states "*...This fight against anti-Semitism should not be instrumentalised to suppress legitimate criticism of Israel's occupation and severe violations of Palestinian human rights.*"

They objected to the definition's "identifying" anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. They wrote "*Zionism, like all other modern Jewish movements in the 20th century, was harshly opposed by many Jews, as well as by non-Jews who were not anti-Semitic. Many victims of the Holocaust opposed Zionism. On the other hand, many anti-Semites supported Zionism. It is nonsensical and inappropriate to identify anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.*"

Further from Justice Hugh Tomlinson QC "*Properly understood in its own terms the IHRA Definition does not mean that activities such as describing Israel as a state enacting policies of apartheid, as practicing settler colonialism or calling for policies of boycott divestment or sanctions against Israel can properly be characterized as antisemitic.*"

Mohammed Dean