Sir Keir Starmer: I will judge my success at tackling Labour antisemitism by the return of Jewish members

April 4, 2020

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The Jewish Chronicle

<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/sir-keir-starmer-i-will-judge-my-success-as-labour-leader-by-the-return-of-jewish-members-1.498781>

New Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has vowed to "tear out the poison" of antisemitism with his party "by its roots".

In a speech, pre-recorded ahead of Saturday's confirmation that he had been elected to replace Jeremy Corbyn, Sir Keir, a former director of public prosecutions,  also said that anti-Jewish racism had "been a stain on our party."

He added: "I have seen the grief it's brought to so many Jewish communities. On behalf of the Labour Party, I am sorry."

Sir Keir, who was elected on the first ballot with 56.2 per cent of the vote, said he would ''judge success by the return of Jewish members".

Rebecca Long-Bailey, who was forced to deny she was a "continuity Corbyn" candidate, got 28 per cent of the vote, while Lisa Nandy received 16 per cent.

Sir Keir made antisemitism - alongside a vow to "engage constructively with the government'' over the current Covid-19 emergency and a vow to to improve the pay and conditions faced by NHS workers -  one of main messages of his victory speech.

The Jewish Labour Movement's parliamentary chair Dame Margaret Hodge offered congratulations to the new Labour leader adding she wanted to "work with Keir so Labour can demonstrate zero tolerance and rid ourselves of the scourge of antisemtism."

The Barking and Dagenham MP added: "We have to draw a line under the last four years. He will be judged by his actions not his words."

Ilford South Labour MP Wes Streeting told the *JC*: “This is a remarkable result that many thought impossible - even at the start of this contest.

"We know that Keir is someone of integrity and substance. I have no doubt that when he said he will tear the poison of antisemitism out by its roots he meant it.

"I will be proud to knock on doors and recommend Keir Starmer to be our country’s next Prime Minister and I believe that through our actions we will be able to win back trust.”

Mike Katz, JLM's national chair, added: “This change of leadership must mark a turning point for Labour in its relationship with the Jewish community.

"Nobody should be under any illusion: restoring trust will take effort, time and political will.

“We need to see strong, moral leadership on the vital task of ridding the Labour Party of antisemitism from the outset and changing a toxic culture that tolerates racism.”

In a he letter sent to all Labour MPs, Sir Keir referred to the need to make amends to the "Jewish community", urging them to "face the future with "honesty and candour".

He added: "That is why I used my first words as Leader to apologise to the Jewish community. It will take time to rebuild trust but with your support we can do it."

Richard Burgon - the Leeds East MP who once said ''Zionism is the enemy of peace'' - trailed in third place behind Angela Rayner in the poll for the new Labour deputy leader.

Jewish Leadership Council chair Jonathan Goldstein: "We congratulate Sir Keir Starmer on his election as Labour Leader and Angela Rayner on her election as Deputy Leader.

"We hope that this will be the beginning of a healing process between the Party and our community.

"Along with our partners, we look forward to discussions with the new leadership as to how we can all move forward and eradicate the scourge of anti-Jewish bigotry that has infected the Party."

Board of Deputies President Marie van der Zyl welcomed the election of Sir Keir and Ms Rayner, noting they had both signed up to the Board's 10 pledges to combat Labour antisemitism.

She said: "Now they must act to rid the party of the awful disease of anti-Jewish racism.

"As the Corbyn era comes to an end, it is clear that history will not look kindly on Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, where anti-Jewish racism has been allowed to run amok and some at the highest levels of the Party have appeared to collude to protect - rather than discipline - antisemites."

Mrs van der Zyl added that the Board would now work with the party to "draw a line under this awful period in Labour's history and that the party can begin to repair its relationship with the Jewish community in the months and years ahead".

Sir Keir had written to the Board to say he was "saddened to learn of the particularly high death rate in the Jewish community" as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter sent to Board President on Saturday evening, Sir Keir wrote: "Please be assured of my sympathy and solidarity at this time, and if there is anything the Labour Party can do, please let me know.''

Sir Keir said he would like to hold a "video conference" with the Board, the Jewish Leadership Council, the Community Security Trust and the Jewish Labour Movement, stressing he wanted to personally write to Mrs van der Zyl on becoming leader to confirm his commitment to stamping out anti-Jewish racism in his party.

He said his office "would be in touch shortly" to organise the meeting.

Meanwhile, in the ballot for Labour's governing body, the National Executive Committee (NEC), there were significant losses for the left-wing of the party.

Johanna Baxter and Gurinder Singh Josan were both chosen to replace the pro-Corbyn Navendu Mishra and Claudia Webbe as local party representatives on the NEC.

Meanwhile Carol Sewell was elected by Labour members as the new NEC BAME representative and will replace former MP Keith Vaz who recently stood down.

Sir Keir confirmed he had appointed Morgan McSweeny as his chief of staff, replacing Karie Murphy, who has long been criticised over her failure to stamp out antisemitism under Mr Corbyn.

General Secretary Jennie Formby is expected to also leave her current role, as reported by the *JC* this week.