After 55 years, UK Jewish MP quits Labour, condemns Corbyn, over anti-Semitism

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By Stuart Winer and TOI Staff

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-uk-lawmaker-quits-labour-over-anti-semitism-after-55-years-in-the-party/>

A veteran UK Labour Party Jewish lawmaker quit the party Wednesday, saying unacceptable anti-Semitism had been allowed to flourish under leader Jeremy Corbyn, who she denounced as being unfit to become prime minister.

Liverpool Riverside MP Louise Ellman announced in a letter her resignation from the party she had been a member of for 55 years.

Ellman, 73, has been a prominent critic of the party’s handling of anti-Semitism allegations and of Corbyn.

“I believe that Jeremy Corbyn would be a danger to the country, a danger to the Jewish community as well, but a danger to the country too,” she [told the Times newspaper.](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/mp-louise-ellman-quits-labour-and-says-corbyn-is-a-danger-to-britain-j80htb5fv)

In the resignation letter, Ellman wrote she is “deeply troubled” by the increase in anti-Semitism and that she could no longer support voting Labour when it risks Corbyn being becoming prime minister.

“I believe that Jeremy Corbyn is not fit to serve as our prime minister,” wrote Ellman who has been member of parliament for the party since 1997.

“Corbyn, who spent three decades on the back-benches consorting with, and never confronting, anti-Semites, Holocaust deniers and terrorists — has attracted the support of too many anti-Semites,” she wrote.

“Jewish members have been bullied, abused and driven out. Antisemites have felt comfortable and vile conspiracy theories have been propagated,” she wrote. “A party that permits anti-Jewish racism to flourish cannot be called an anti-racist party.”

She said her decision was “truly agonizing,” but clarified that she would not join another party, saying she would return to Labour when the party has a different leader. “I can’t stay in the Labour party under its current leadership,” she told the BBC on Thursday. “But I hope that under a different leadership I can return to my political home.”

A Labour party spokesperson said that Corbyn thanked Ellman for her many years of service.

“Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party are fully committed to the support, defense and celebration of the Jewish community and continue to take robust action to root out anti-Semitism in the party and wider society,” the spokesperson said in a statement.

Earlier this month Ellman had faced a [no confidence vote scheduled for Yom Kippur eve](https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-mp-who-criticized-corbyn-faces-labour-no-confidence-motion-on-yom-kippur/) by a local Labour Party branch over her criticism of Corbyn and remarks in September that she “understands why Jews would seriously consider leaving Britain if Corbyn became PM.”

The [no confidence vote was cancelled](https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/labour-activists-warned-not-to-discuss-no-confidence-motion-in-dame-louise-ellman-on-yom-kippur-1.489774) after officials at Labour’s North West Region warned against the action.

Other Labour MPs lamented Ellman’s resignation Wednesday with Harriet Harman tweeting that “this should make every one of us in the Labour Party feel dismayed and ashamed.”

Fellow Labour lawmaker Ruth Smeeth tweeted: “I am devastated. That another Jewish woman has been hounded out of our party. There is no excuse, no explanation, no justification for the anti-Jewish hat and abuse that she has suffered. The Leadership of the Labour Party should be ashamed that this is happening on their watch.”

Corbyn has come under prolonged attack — including from within Labour — for allegedly allowing anti-Semitism to spread in the party and for initially refusing to adopt fully the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism in its code of conduct.

Labour has grappled with anti-Semitism accusations since far-left Corbyn was elected party chief in 2015. Fresh scrutiny arose this year after a BBC program in which a number of former party officials accused him and his allies of interfering in efforts to address the issue.

In May the UK’s Equality and Human Rights Commission announced it had launched a formal investigation into allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour party.

The EHRC, the main government anti-racism watchdog, said it would probe whether the main opposition party led by Corbyn had discriminated against, harassed or victimized Jews in violation of the UK’s 2006 Equality Act.

In February Jewish Labour MP Luciana Berger [quit the party](https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-mp-who-left-uk-labour-over-anti-semitism-joins-liberal-democrat-party/)calling it “institutionally anti-Semitic” and last month announced she was joining the Liberal Democrats instead.