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The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
UK Government
2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

14th March 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss

I write regarding the request that the UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) have made to you that Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, spokesman for Neturei Karta International, be excluded from the UK when he comes here next month. They published this on 8th March on their website as follows:

www.uklfi.com/home-secretary-receives-request-to-exclude-naturei-karta-member-from-uk

They have made many statements on that post that are untrue, which I assume they have submitted to you and I would like to point these out. I would also like to ask that you allow Rabbi Weiss into the UK to say why he favours a single state in Palestine. Please permit him to take part in our One Democratic Palestine's "Muslim & Jew: Beyond Israel" tour in April, where he is scheduled to explain how Judaism and Islam are close. This is a view shared by many Haredi orthodox Jewish communities, including in the UK. He believes establishing a state exclusive to Jews contradicts Judaism and that Jews and Muslims can live in peace in a truly democratic state.

The UKLFI are notorious in their attacks on activists in getting people fired or exhibitions closed for having the temerity to support Palestinian voices- they recently forced a London hospital to remove Gaza children's artwork (see [Chelsea and Westminster hospital: Why is Gaza Strip artwork by Palestinian children being censored? | The Independent](#)). However, they failed to prevent Edinburgh Council from discussing what it can do to help Gaza- [Edinburgh Council to Explore Support for Gaza – Twin Edinburgh with Gaza \(twingaza.com\)](#) when Police Scotland and Michael Mansfield KC gave assurances that, contrary to UKLFI threats, there was nothing illegal about twinning with Gaza.

They now mount a fresh attack on our freedom of opinion and expression. Rabbi Weiss is a peaceful, devoutly religious man who knows much about antisemitism- his grandparents died in Auschwitz. Excluding him would be *ipso facto* antisemitic because he would be being victimised for being Jewish. He seeks to express his religious beliefs. Others are let into the UK who are pro-Palestinian should the Rabbi be unfairly treated because of his Judaic faith?

The inaccuracies and slanders in UKLFI case are many. The whole argument that I am antisemitic is made because they employ the fraudulent and politicised IHRA Definition of Antisemitism, which equates criticism of Israel with a hatred of Jews, a plainly ridiculous conceit and one which the definition itself declares to be antisemitic (the definition cites an example of antisemitism to be "Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.")

The UKLFI declare: *Pete Gregson is a former GMB Union shop-steward, who was expelled for behaviour recognised by it as "antisemitic and racist in nature" and "simply unacceptable" Holocaust denial after he issued a press release saying that Israel is a "racist endeavour" and "tends to exaggerate the importance of the Holocaust for its own political ends".*

The truth is that I was expelled from the GMB for breaching the [IHRA Definition of Antisemitism](#)- which means saying “Israel is a racist endeavour”- not about discriminating against Jews. I was defended at my hearing by two prominent Jews who were clear that nothing I had said was antisemitic (Rabbi Ahron Cohen and Tony Greenstein) and that it should be perfectly legitimate to criticise Israel.

What the UKLFI call my alleged “simply unacceptable” Holocaust denial is also absolutely untrue. What I said was that “Israel exaggerates the Holocaust for political ends”. I have never claimed the Holocaust was exaggerated, as I believe they well know. The murder of 6 million Jews in WW2 is a profound stain on humanity. But why let the truth get in the way of a good story?

If you want to learn the story behind what happened, look at the video I made about my expulsion at www.tinyurl.com/gmbihra that Ken Loach told me he loved.

Furthermore, I was not penalised by the GMB for “*issuing a press release*”. It was because I lodged a Change.org petition to the Labour leadership asking them to abandon the IHRA Definition. This was headed “Israel is a racist endeavour” (see www.change.org/p/to-chair-of-labour-s-nec-andy-kerr-labour-members-declaring-israel-is-a-racist-endeavour-call-on-nec-to-abandon-full-ihra) and was designed to make a show of solidarity; 2,652 Labour Party members have signed.

What happened then was that a prominent pro-Israel supporter, Rea Wolfson, who was, through Momentum, a Labour NEC member- and a regional officer at GMB Scotland- got involved; she learned of my petition, through my letters to the NEC and chose to get me expelled. I remain the only shop steward in the world to be expelled for criticising Israel- NOT for discriminating against Jews.

Also incorrect is their assertion regarding my volunteering as Treasurer at my local scout group, which I have undertaken since 2012. I was not suspended from the Scouts last year for any “antisemitic activities”- I was suspended because I was Chairperson of the Campaign Against Bogus Antisemitism (now One Democratic Palestine). The Scouts to date have never interviewed me or discussed my suspension, and our charitable status may well be withdrawn as a result of their action (for as treasurer I am unable to submit the accounts).

Our own Group Scout Leader, an Israeli Jew, declares he supports my freedom of speech on Palestine and is in favour of my reinstatement. He knows I am ever careful to keep my volunteering activities separate; I have taken great care never to publicly mention to either body my passion for both young people (I was a scout myself from the age of 12 to 16 and was a youth worker for 20 years) and Palestine. I believe I am being unreasonably targeted by a senior scout sympathetic to Israel; the Scouts have been unable to conclude the matter because they know there is no case. I posit that my political activities should have no bearing on being the treasurer; in fact, the Scouting movement has never embarked in this kind of witch-hunt before; it is indeed a first.

Unfortunately, the UKLFI posting barely mentions the people at the heart of the matter- those I seek to defend- the Palestinians- who are suffering the brunt of the racism prevalent in the current Israeli Government, but one which Israel has promoted since its inception, beginning with the Nakba in 1948 and the expulsion of 800,000 Palestinians from their homes, where they languish in refugee camps to this day: they simply have nowhere else to go.

UKLFI goes on to declare more mistruths (my corrections are in brackets, in bold):

In 2019, Gregson held a series of public meetings in Edinburgh, [these were not public meetings, they were called “Palfilm Nights” and were screenings of videos about the Palestinian struggle for self-determination] which were promoted as “An ideal opportunity to learn about the Palestine-

Israeli situation and to improve discussion skills in a friendly and supportive environment". The following statements by Gregson at the meetings were noted at the time by an attendee: **[there were only 8 people present, when their attendee revealed he was part of Glasgow Friends of Israel but then went onto engage in polite discussion with the rest of us around why we supported Palestine. His reporting of our discussion is 100% false, and I can proffer witnesses to this]**

a) "They're not the same as Nazis because they don't use gas chambers. But they have got the same idea about racial purity. And the racial purity that the Jews want is that you have to be Jewish, otherwise you're the enemy". **[this is quite untrue; I never said anything about racial purity or Nazis, or that anyone that wasn't Jewish was their enemy]**

b) "Nobody stops this racist march because we feel guilty because of the Holocaust. This is the card that the Jews in Israel play". **[there was no racist march that I know of ever mentioned at the Palfilm nights- again this comment is wholly fictional]**

c) "The Zionists have just as much pleasure killing Arabs".

[again completely untrue; I never declared Zionists took pleasure in killing Arabs- it is a ridiculous thing to claim]

I imagine that some of what they have attributed to Rabbi Weiss is similarly untrue. I await his comment.

Indeed, I would argue that allowing the Rabbi into the UK to tour 15 cities would act to reduce antisemitism, as he would be making clear that the Judaic faith and a close reading of the Torah declares that Jews have no right to migrate to Israel *en masse* if no Messiah has come- I would argue that it is important for the British public to know that there are many Jews who oppose Israel; and that by understanding what anti-Zionism is, we can better prevent it being confused with anti-Semitism.

I'm sure you know he is the International Spokesman of the Neturie Karta- probably the most famous pro-Palestinian Rabbi on this planet, for his principled stance and engaging rhetoric. (see <http://inminds.co.uk/qa-rabbi-weiss.html>). He has been to speak in the UK before. Contrary to the assertions of Jonathan Turner, chief executive of UKLFI, on those occasions, his talks did NOT "stir up religious and racial hatred against the vast majority of British Jews". Neither did they "serve to promote extremism" as he claims. The talks were well-received with no conflict reported.

Indeed, we have been clear in all our publicity about the tour that the Friends of Israel would be welcome to attend the talks and engage in debate with the Rabbi (see the poster at www.onepalestine.land/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Tour-poster-p1.png).

Mt Turner claims to be writing on behalf of the Jewish community, but [a survey of British Jews](#) by City University London in 2015 shows deep disagreement on the term "Zionism", with 41 % not taking up the political identifier "Zionist." 31 % identified as anti-Zionist or non-Zionist, while 10 % said they were unsure. The survey also found that the number of British Jews who call themselves "Zionist" dropped from 72 % in 2010 to 59 % in 2015.

Many *Haredi* Orthodox communities are largely anti-Zionist in outlook, as are many non-Orthodox and secular Jewish citizens, and are angered by attempts to conflate anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

So UKLFI clearly do NOT represent the Jewish community. Indeed, there are over 100 members of the Neturei Karta (NK) sect to which Rabbi Weiss belongs, in London, with their synagogue (to which I was welcomed last year) in Stoke Newington. In the US, the NK number over 5,000.

Britain's status as the "mother" of Israel means it has a unique role to play in bringing together Palestinians and Jews in an approach that has worked in Northern Ireland and in South Africa. Rabbi Weiss seeks to explain why Jews should not be held accountable for the actions of the Israeli state. It needs to be made clear that those following the Judaic faith are in no way responsible for the illegal conduct of Israel.

We hope the Home Secretary will exercise her power to allow Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss to enter the UK in April, allowing him to contribute to the debate about the way forward for this troubled part of the world.

Incidentally, our reason at One Democratic Palestine for hosting this tour is to promote the "one-state" solution. We know that Britain avows a two-state solution but Israel has taken so much land that a separate Palestinian state is no longer viable. We believe that the way forward is a similar approach to what has seen the end of apartheid in South Africa and the end of the sectarian war in Northern Ireland; we advocate this position as it is articulated by the One Democratic State Campaign, (www.onestatecampaign.org/all/en-manifesto) and would like to see peace in the region. A true peace would also result in far fewer refugees from there coming to the UK.

We believe that the real reason the UKLFI seeks to exclude the Rabbi is because they want no exploration of a change to the status quo in the Middle East and of any solution that reflects what the majority of Palestinians want.

We hope that you, as Home Secretary will support freedom of speech and allow the Rabbi to come again to the UK to talk about his vision for peace. He, alongside most Palestinians and many other Jews, seeks a single state solution where all citizens can enjoy equal rights, freedom and security.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pete Gregson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and connected.

Pete Gregson (Chair)

One Democratic Palestine