

## GUARDIAN SLANDER FEBRUARY 2020

**From:** [elisabeth.ribbans@guardian.co.uk](mailto:elisabeth.ribbans@guardian.co.uk) <[elisabeth.ribbans@guardian.co.uk](mailto:elisabeth.ribbans@guardian.co.uk)> **On Behalf Of** Readers' editor (Guardian)

**Sent:** 29 February 2020 08:41

**To:** Peter Gregson <[chuff.chuff@outlook.com](mailto:chuff.chuff@outlook.com)>

**Subject:** Re: Inaccurate and unfair reporting on Campaigners for Palestine

Dear Peter Gregson

Thank you for your patience in awaiting a response to your complaint about an article headlined, "[UK left activists attended events with far right antisemites](#)", published by the Observer on 23 February 2020.

I have now had time to review the article in light of your concerns and will explain my findings on each of your points.

First, you said it was inaccurate to include you in an article about leftwing activists associating with far-right antisemites. Second, you said that "James Thring did not 'speak' at the event at which I gave a talk"; that he was in the audience and may have asked a question but he was not a speaker.

The article, as you are aware, reports on how former Labour party members have been observed at meetings with antisemites and focuses in particular on a Keep Talking event that took place on 5 March 2019. The article features footage from the meeting at which James Thring spoke from the floor to suggest the Holocaust did not happen. Later on it says that you were the guest speaker "during the meeting at which Thring spoke" — this is clearly a reference to him speaking as described and quoted in paragraphs three, four and five, and as shown in the covert recording. The article goes on to list individuals, described as Holocaust deniers and revisionists, who either attended the 5 March meeting or who are closely involved with Keep Talking. You have said in your email (and in your talk) that you accept the horror of the Holocaust; the article does not suggest you think otherwise. But I do not consider that, for the reasons above, the article was inaccurate to reference your presence at one of these meetings attended by Holocaust deniers and others with antisemitic views. Neither was it inaccurate to say James Thring spoke at the meeting at which you were guest speaker, when the nature of his contribution was made clear for readers earlier in the story.

Third, you said you were expelled from the GMB "for pointing out that Israel now exploits the Holocaust for political ends". The article said that you were expelled over "antisemitic allegations", and while I note you disagree with the IHRA definition of antisemitism, it is the case that the allegation against you, as set out in the notice of disciplinary action from GMB Scotland dated 6 November 2018, was that you "posted or distributed on social media materials that are of an antisemitic nature". As such, I cannot find the article was inaccurate on this point.

Finally, you have said you are still a member of the Labour Party whereas the article described you as an "ex-member". I understand you were suspended from the Labour party in 2019 pending a disciplinary investigation. I'd be grateful if you could confirm that the suspension has been lifted so that I can consider whether an amendment is required on this point.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Ribbans  
Readers' Editor

Guardian readers' editor's office

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On Sun, 23 Feb 2020 at 13:13, Peter Gregson <[chuff.chuff@outlook.com](mailto:chuff.chuff@outlook.com)> wrote:

Dear Readers Editor,

I write to complain about an article published in your online edition yesterday (22/2/20) by Mark Townsend. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/feb/22/uk-left-activists-at-far-right-events-antisemites-holocaust-deniers>

It is inaccurate and unfair to parcel me up in an article claiming I associate with far-right anti-Semites. I fully accept the Holocaust and that the treatment the Jews suffered was a grotesque crime against humanity. But it was European anti-Semitism which led to the creation of the state of Israel.

I was expelled from the GMB for pointing out that that Israel now exploits the Holocaust for political ends. The Government there has convinced the population that Palestinians will never accept peace and plays to fears about extermination to stir up antipathy against those Arabs seeking their right to return and compensation for what they have suffered.

The article refers to a speech I made in March last year at the Keep Talking group- "The loss of freedom of speech on Israel, thanks to bogus antisemitism claims." If you have seen any of the Lobby films broadcast in 2017 (and passed by OFCOM) you will understand what I am talking about <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceCOhdgRBoc&feature=youtu.be> If you can spare the time to look at these videos, made through undercover reporting, you will begin to understand the damage the adoption of the IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism has caused to our freedom of speech on Israel. It is used to prevent discussion of the racist nature of the creation of Israel, as demonstrated in the Nakba, when 750,000 Palestinians were brutally expelled from their homes in 1949, expulsions which go to this day.

The whole article conflates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, matters which are utterly different. The former act is to criticise a political doctrine; the latter is to support racism. Yes, I am an anti-Zionist, but I am utterly comfortable with Jews and have never shown any prejudice against them.

To claim that Israel is racist is not the same as being prejudiced against Jews (many of whom I count as my friends).

I have been a lifelong subscriber to the Guardian and I am hugely disappointed in this article, which uses guilt by association to tar me – and others- as an anti-Semite. It references the highly respected campaigner for Palestine, Miko Peled, who also spoke at a Keep Talking event, suggesting even he is an anti-Semite- if you listen to any of Miko's speeches, you will understand why this Israeli criticises Zionism, too.

This article represents the kind of biased slanderous coverage which undermines our freedom of speech on abuses of civil liberties abroad. Freedom of speech is something I would have hoped the Guardian supported.

I would be grateful if you could remove the article or at the very least all references to me.

Yours sincerely

Pete Gregson

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