

Britain's *Jewish Chronicle* exposed as propaganda outlet for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Jean Shaoul

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Just days after the aggressively pro-Israel *Jewish Chronicle* published a story based upon Israeli intelligence purporting to be a “major scoop,” Israeli sources exposed the article as a tissue of lies. The author’s journalistic and academic credentials were equally fictitious.

The unravelling scandal has thrown into sharp relief the *JC*’s opaque ownership and propaganda role, as well as the sprawling and murky network of relationships between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Office, the British government and media, including the BBC, and the Zionist lobby groups masquerading as Jewish community groups.

The article by Elon Perry, whose name was later revealed as Eli Yifrach, claimed Israeli “intelligence sources” indicated that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was intending to smuggle out the remaining hostages via the Philadelphi Corridor on Gaza’s southern border with Egypt and accompany them and Hamas leaders in Gaza to Iran.

The evidence, according to Perry, came from “the interrogation of a captured senior Hamas official, as well as by information obtained from documents seized on Thursday, August 29, the day the six bodies of the murdered hostages were retrieved.” His article continued, “To Sinwar, the Philadelphi corridor has turned out to be the only option available to fulfil his plan.”

The article came just one day after Netanyahu had rejected a ceasefire and hostage return deal, insisting on keeping the military in Gaza’s Philadelphi Corridor. He claimed that unless the army controlled the area, Hamas could “easily smuggle hostages out... to the Sinai desert,” and from there to “Iran or... Yemen.” After that, he added, “they’re gone forever.”

Just one day later, the *JC* story started to unravel. Israel’s *Channel 12* repudiated the article’s claims, saying that the security establishment denied all knowledge of the supposed intelligence. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson Daniel Hagari dismissed the story as baseless.

Ynet journalist Ronen Bergman, who has close links with Israel’s intelligence apparatus and authored the book *Rise and Kill First*, cited several sources that described the *Jewish Chronicle*’s claims as a “wild fabrication” and “one hundred percent lies.” A military official told Bergman definitively, “This is an influence campaign on ... the Israeli public ... and we are determined to find the person or entity behind it.”

Bergman said that the IDF believed this was an attempt to swing public opinion behind Netanyahu as mass protests calling for a hostage deal cut across his efforts to keep the war going, thereby delaying his ongoing corruption trial that could put him behind bars. He revealed that an earlier article by Perry, ‘The real reason Hamas can’t free the remaining hostages’, was likewise untrue.

Veteran journalist Shlomi Eldar said that this was clearly “a leak from the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, which is manipulating the foreign press... to further tear apart Israel’s divided society and save Netanyahu from the intensifying protests.”

Netanyahu is no stranger to using the media to do his bidding. His corruption trial turns on three cases where he sought to gain favourable coverage in the Israeli and international media.

Further investigations revealed that Perry, the Britain-based freelance journalist who authored this and eight other “scoops” in the *JC*, had stated on his website—parroted by the *JC*—that he had served as a commando soldier for 28 years, had 25 years of journalism experience and had worked at Tel Aviv University for 15 years. All of this turned out to be false, as Perry was forced to admit.

Yet the *JC* had at the very least not bothered to carry out the most elementary checks on either the author or the sources and substance of his articles, in line with its slavish support for Israel, Netanyahu, his ongoing war of annihilation of the Palestinians and plans for a wider war against Iran and its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The rotten record of the *Jewish Chronicle*

This has opened up questions about the secrecy of the *JC*’s ownership and funding, something previously unheard of in the British newspaper industry.

In 2020, when the loss-making paper was at risk of closing, a consortium headed by Sir Robbie Gibb took it over. Gibb, a journalist, political advisor and a self-declared Thatcherite Conservative, was knighted after serving as the official Downing Street spokesman for Theresa May’s Conservative government in 2019. The consortium included the right-wing journalist Sir William Shawcross, former Labour legislator John Woodcock—a former chair of Labour Friends of Israel who now sits in the House of Lords as Lord Walney—and TV journalist and pro-Israel polemicist John Ware. The outgoing head of the paper, Alan Jacobs, decried the deal as “a shameful attempt to hijack” the paper.

Gibb, the sole director and owner of Jewish Chronicle Media, now turned into a charitable trust, refused to say where the £3.5 million loan—now written off—for the takeover came from, despite appeals from the Jewish community and journalists, including former editor of the *Guardian* Alan Rusbridger.

Gibb plays a politically important role in public life, not only as the owner of the *JC* but crucially as a non-executive director on the board of the BBC, to which he was appointed by Boris Johnson’s government in 2021, thanks to his implacable opposition to the public broadcaster and its supposed “liberal” bias. Gibb had been advising the right-wing *GB News*, whose first chair would be his old associate, Andrew Neil.

He sits on the key committee looking at editorial standards at the BBC,

whose coverage of Israel/Palestine he lambasts as “biased” against Israel. His editor at the *JC*, Jake Wallis Simons, is a bitter critic of the BBC’s reporting of the war. In an extraordinary intervention even before the start of Israel’s October war on Gaza, Gibb tried to impose an impartiality review in relation to BBC’s coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. There have now been calls for him to resign his position.

Exposed as a front for Netanyahu, the *JC*, at 180 years of publication the oldest Jewish newspaper in Britain, sought to dampen the fire by repudiating Perry’s articles, removing them from its website, severing its connections with the writer and issuing an apology. In an attempt to save their own skins, four of its most well-known columnists: Jonathan Freedland, Hadley Freeman, David Aaronovich and David Baddiel, all of whom are contributors or former contributors to the *Guardian*, as well as Colin Shindler, emeritus professor of Israel studies at SOAS, London University, handed in their resignations. *Sunday Times* journalist Josh Glancy quit the *JC* over similar concerns last year.

In his open letter to *JC* editor Simons, Freedland said, “Too often, the *JC* reads like a partisan, ideological instrument, its judgements political rather than journalistic.” But this says as much about Freedland as it does about Netanyahu’s propaganda arm to which he had contributed since 1998, using it above all as an outlet to promote the *Guardian*’s opposition to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the slander campaign decrying him as an antisemite.

The *Jewish Chronicle*’s blatant disregard for the truth and journalistic standards has been the paper’s trademark for years. As Jonathan Cook, writing in the *Middle East Eye*, noted, the tame Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has repeatedly found the paper guilty of breaching its code of practice. Journalist and academic Brian Cathcart found that in the five years from 2018 to 2023, the *JC* had broken the code a staggering 41 times. It had also lost, or been forced to settle, at least four libel cases. Despite this, IPSO has never launched an investigation or fined the paper.

The “left antisemitism” campaign against Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters

Crucially, this privileging of partisanship over journalistic integrity took off after Corbyn’s election as Labour leader in September 2015, when the *JC*, along with the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD), the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC), Labour Friends of Israel, the Community Security Trust, Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) and other pro-Zionist organisations played a crucial role in the vicious and thoroughly dishonest smear campaign against him and his supporters who opposed Israel’s suppression of the Palestinians.

Their black propaganda campaign was directed by Washington, with the Trump administration saying it would not allow a Corbyn-led government to take office, in cahoots with the security agencies of the UK and Israel. It was politically led by right-wing Blairites in Corbyn’s own party, the Conservative government and a pliant and corrupt pro-business media, including the *Jewish Chronicle*.

The aim of these organisations, with their strident denunciations of Corbyn and his supporters as antisemites and their efforts to “counter the de-legitimization of Israel,” was to silence any criticism of Netanyahu’s right-wing government and its brutal subjugation of the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and within Israel itself, as well as its plans for a direct military confrontation with Iran and its regional allies.

In the December 2019 general election campaign, the *JC* played a central role in the anti-Corbyn slander campaign. It published a front-page appeal urging non-Jews not to support Labour, which was said to

represent “an existential threat” to the Jewish community in Britain. Its then editor Stephen Pollard, a free-market advocate, is also a frequent contributor to the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Sun* and the *Daily Telegraph*—the right-wing stable of Britain’s press.

Freedland stepped into the fray, suggesting that British Jews “will approach the coming election with a trepidation they have rarely known before.” The *Guardian* also featured a letter from Corbyn’s opponents proclaiming that they would not vote for Labour in the December 12 general election because his leadership had made the party antisemitic.

The *JC* gave prominence to attacks on Corbyn by then Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and former Labour MP and former Jewish Labour Movement parliamentary chairperson Luciana Berger. Berger quit the Labour Party in February 2019 over Corbyn’s supposed support for antisemitism, to co-found the Independent Group, which she then left to join the Liberal Democrats. Just prior to the 2019 election, the *JC* included a lengthy interview with Johnson in which he declared that the “threat” from Corbyn is “very real”, along with a full-page advert in which Johnson called for a vote for the Tories.

Corbyn’s capitulation to the slanderers

Those who were targeted and accused of antisemitism within the Labour Party were anti-Zionists. As the Al Jazeera film *The Lobby* explained, the Israeli embassy in London funded a campaign managed by Labour Friends of Israel to undermine Corbyn because of his longstanding support for Palestinian rights.

The programme revealed that an embassy staffer, Shai Masot, worked with pro-Israel Labour MPs, who exaggerated and concocted examples of antisemitism in the party. They sought thereby to portray the Labour party as “institutionally antisemitic,” while they organised plots and coup attempts against Corbyn. Johnson, as foreign secretary in the Conservative government, helped Israel cover up the plot, declaring the matter closed after an apology from the Israeli embassy, in sharp contrast to his “outrage” over unsubstantiated accusations of Russia’s attempts to interfere in Britain’s elections and plant fake stories in the media.

The filthy campaign in which the *JC* played a pivotal role was only successful because Corbyn refused to mobilise the hundreds of thousands, particularly young people, who had joined the Labour Party on the basis of his pledge to oppose austerity and militarism against the Blairite right-wing. Instead, when confronted with slanderous attacks on some of his closest political associates, such as Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth, Jackie Walker and Chris Williamson, Corbyn accepted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, which brands calling Israel a “racist endeavour” as antisemitic, and threw his allies to the wolves.

From then on, opposing the Zionist slanders became impossible under Corbyn’s leadership, enabling the right-wing under the avowed Zionist Starmer to retake control of the party following Labour’s electoral defeat in December 2019.

Zionism’s lying claim to speak for all Jews

The *JC* portrays itself as the “voice” of the “mainstream Jewish community.” This is a lie—and not only because it treats Jewish people as a single, monolithic bloc despite the vast gap in income and wealth that similarly characterises the rest of the British population. Crucially, it

ignores the widespread non-belief, non-membership of a synagogue and marriages or partnerships with a non-Jewish partner among the Jewish population.

The claim that opposition to the state of Israel and its actions constitutes “antisemitism” implies that the Zionist state of Israel is synonymous with the Jewish people and Judaism. This is based on a racist assumption: that all Jews, by blood or some other mystical connection, have an inherent loyalty to the Israeli state. Yet Jews in Britain and all over the world have taken to the streets in their tens of thousands to oppose the Gaza genocide.

Zionism emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a nationalist reaction by sections of the Jewish bourgeoisie and middle class against the Marxist and socialist movement in the European and Jewish working class. Although it was granted false legitimacy by the fascist horrors of the Nazi Holocaust, the Zionist state never represented the social interests of the Jewish masses, who played a major role in the socialist movement, but rather those of a capitalist ruling class and the imperialist powers, Britain and then the US, as the guardian of their interests in the resource-rich Middle East.

Its defence of Zionism is the main political purpose and central political crime of the *JC*, whatever its murky relationship with Netanyahu.



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