

This letter is in response to these original questions from Labour Left Alliance:
https://labourleft.org/uncategorized/our-questions-to-all-momentum-ncg-candidates/?fbclid=IwAR15ar68D26TCV3FCICq6UsIR__iR303mWneo3gb5UJ6va-dg2-hOVom22o

Dear Labour Left Alliance,

Thank you for writing to us with your questions. We are responding collectively as candidates accountable to the grassroots members that have backed us in this campaign and, ultimately, the entire Momentum membership who we seek to serve if elected to the NCG.

On the question of an annual members' conference, we believe the future of Momentum's decision-making structures are for the membership to decide. As stated in our [plan](#), we will hold a Refounding Convention by May 2021 so all members are given the chance to vote on a new constitution and decide our organisation's long-term future, including the mechanisms by which we set policy and choose our leadership.

This commitment to democracy extends to how we will approach the next NEC elections. One of the biggest recent let-downs for Momentum members, and the left as a whole, was the unacceptable splitting of the left slate in the recent NEC by-elections.

It is indicative of the backroom culture that permeates so much of the left and Momentum, that Momentum's leadership has made no attempt to communicate to the membership just what exactly happened. Most members have been left confused and angry.

Clearly mistakes were made, and the way the entire process was handled illustrates how much a change of direction Momentum really needs.

We have already seen the serious consequences of this failure in the recent NEC selection for the Labour Party General Secretary, where the right's majority on the NEC led to a candidate on the right of the party succeeding. We cannot make the same mistakes again.

If elected, we will absolutely usher in an end to backroom deals, and we will give the membership a proper say on Momentum's NEC candidates, while working with other left organisations and their candidates to produce a united left slate. The exact process this will take should be determined in dialogue with both Momentum's membership and relevant groups across the Labour left. We also think that when it comes to concerns on candidates' records, a more open process allows for greater scrutiny and accountability.

On the questions related to individual candidates, we are committed to backing the collective decision of Momentum's members and allied organisations to select candidates. We believe that the only way the left can unite is if we embrace and respect democratic processes that cut through personal and factional interests, and ensure legitimate and widely supported

outcomes. More broadly, we believe that the failures of Momentum go beyond any individual, and reflect a much deeper loss of direction within the organisation.

With regards to decision making processes for Labour Party policy, our plan calls for a campaign for comprehensive reform of the Party's structures, organisation and culture. We fully support Open Selections and democratised local campaign forums and regional boards. Many Momentum members have a deep frustration with the way that member-backed policy decided at Conference has often been sidestepped by the Party. They are also frustrated with the National Policy Forum structure, seeing it as a deflection of member-led democracy and a relic of the New Labour years. We believe that when it comes to deciding Labour Party policy, Conference should absolutely be sovereign.

On the Labour Party's complaints and rules procedures, we should first note that we believe that a robust, consistent and fair process is critical to maintain trust in the Party. It is also critically important to safeguard the rights of minorities and marginalised groups. We are committed to fighting racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, ageism and disablism. A key role of the left is to build a movement that is inclusive of people of all identities and backgrounds, to stand with oppressed groups in their struggles, and to fight the rise of the far right.

As such, we do not see the current Labour complaints and rules procedures as fit for purpose. The Labour leaked report has shed light on why complaints of antisemitism were often not dealt with effectively and also raises grave questions about the Party's commitment to tackling a culture of anti-black racism, sexism and Islamophobia. This shows that the Party is failing minorities and marginalised groups. Many on the left are additionally deeply disturbed with the way that rules have been applied unevenly across the Party. While some individuals face suspension for unclear reasons, other members and staff who have been accused of grave transgressions (e.g. those alleged in the Labour leaked report) have retained their membership and positions.

We call for an end to factional and inconsistent application of the rules against members and an overhaul of the process in order to restore the trust of the membership and to protect minorities and marginalised groups that form a valued and important part of our movement. We also see expulsion as a remedy of last resort. One of our goals is to put political education at the forefront of how we support Momentum members to lead. This includes equipping them with the skills and understanding to create an inclusive and diverse movement that stands against racism and discrimination, all the while maintaining safe spaces. However, we are clear that any complaints procedure must have exclusion as an option for serious transgressions.

Independent reviews reveal that there are clear incidences of antisemitism within the Labour Party that must be tackled. Even though these reviews also indicate that the level of antisemitism in the Labour Party does not exceed that of the general population or other political parties, any level of antisemitism is serious and needs to be dealt with - and the Labour Party, including the left, is not immune from anti-semitism and other forms of racism.

BDS emerged from within Palestinian civil society as a non-violent means to pressure the Israeli government to end its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and comply with its obligations under international law. These kinds of tactics have a long history within movements fighting against oppression, and we reject accusations that they are inherently anti-semitic.

Labour's NEC adopted the full IHRA working definition of antisemitism in 2018, alongside a commitment that this will not in any way undermine freedom of expression regarding the actions of the government of Israel or the rights of Palestinians. We recognise that many Palestinian civil society organisations, human rights campaigners and others have raised concerns about how the examples that accompany the IHRA working definition could be misused to stifle discussion about Palestinian oppression. We are absolutely clear in holding the Labour Party to its commitment on not undermining freedom of expression, as well as to defending our Jewish comrades against anti-semitism. We do not believe in a hierarchy of racism or prejudice. We stand firmly with our Jewish members against antisemitism and recognise that it is in itself antisemitic to hold Jewish people accountable for the actions of the government of Israel. At the same time we stand in solidarity with the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people for self-determination, an end to human rights abuses and illegal occupation, and expect Labour members to be able to discuss these matters.

Momentum needs a change of direction and a change of leadership. Our campaign has brought people together from across our movement with the common goal of refounding Momentum as the truly member-led, grassroots, socialist organisation it can be.

We hope these answers give you an insight into where we as Forward Momentum candidates will look to take Momentum, and how we will interact with other left organisations.

Regards,

Forward Momentum candidates

Callum Bell

Gaya Sriskanthan

Rory MacLean

Liz Smith

Harriet Protheroe Soltani

Alan Gibbons

Charlie Bollaan

Tracey Hylton

Andrew Scattergood

Solma Ahmed

Mish Rahman

Abbie Clark

Sonali Bhattacharyya

Deborah Hermanns

Ana Oppenheim

Mick Moore
Darran McLaughlin
Jennifer Forbes
Shona Jemphrey
Phil Clarke
Christine Howard
Nadia Whittome
Jamie Driscoll
Barrie Margetts