



JCR Emergency General Meeting Sunday 14th February 2021

This emergency general meeting was called following a majority vote by the JCR Committee in accordance with the JCR constitution, part 3, section 4, subsection 8:

1. *An Emergency Meeting can only be called by the President if at least one of the following conditions are met:*
 - a. *The JCR Committee votes it is necessary by a simple majority*
 - b. *If petitioned to do so by at least 15 JCR members*

If you are a Jewish student who has been affected by any of the issues raised in this meeting, the contact details for the University Jewish Chaplaincy are as follows:

Email: tracey@mychaplaincy.co.uk

Phone Number: 07944 016 022

Email: michael@mychaplaincy.co.uk

Phone Number: 07717 742 835

The St. Anne's College Welfare team are also on hand to provide support.

Motion: Standing in solidarity with Oxford's Jewish Community

Proposed by: Sanaa Mughal

Seconded by: Adam Possenor

This JCR notes that:

1. On Monday 8th February, St Peter's College held an event in conversation with Ken Loach;
2. Ken Loach has made comments in the past which are antisemitic under the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which has been adopted by the University of Oxford
 - a. This has included Holocaust denial, denying the extent of antisemitism in the Labour Party, and providing justifications for antisemitism
 - b. A full list of Loach's prejudiced comments can be found in Appendix A;
3. According to a motion passed by St Peter's College's JCR, in a meeting with Jewish students from St Peter's College on Sunday, the college's Master asked the students if Holocaust denial is 'always' unequivocally antisemitic and tried to downplay the issue by presenting it as a 'cancel culture' controversy.
4. Oxford University Jewish Society (JSoc) - an apolitical organisation - released a statement on Monday morning bringing attention to Loach's actions
 - a. This statement was then shared on Facebook and Twitter by Roger Waters, who claimed to over two million followers that the JSoc was part of "the Israeli lobby", a comment which is itself an antisemitic trope.
 - b. Since then, Oxford JSoc's social media channels have been hit with widespread and extreme antisemitism, with individual students in this JCR specifically targeted.

5. The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Union of Jewish Students have joined Oxford JSoc in their condemnation of St Peter's College's actions.
6. St Peter's College has refused to apologise for their actions, instead adding fuel to the fire by releasing a statement attempting to justify their inadequate handling of the matter.
7. St Peter's JCR has passed a motion urging its members to boycott the event and affirming their solidarity with Oxford's Jewish community
 - a. The full text of this motion can be found in Appendix B;
8. This most recent incident is part of a series of cases of antisemitism at the University of Oxford over the past few years.

This JCR believes that:

1. Ken Loach has a history of blatantly antisemitic remarks.
2. In their actions over recent days, St Peter's College have failed in their duty of care to Jewish students.
3. There must be a zero-tolerance policy for antisemitism both at the University of Oxford and in wider society.
4. The actions of the Master of St Peter's College have been unacceptable, insensitive, and ignorant of the nature of antisemitism and the concerns of Jewish students.
5. The antisemitism experienced on social media by Jewish students at Oxford is reprehensible and should be condemned unequivocally.

This JCR therefore resolves to:

1. Release a statement on behalf of the JCR which:
 - a. Expresses their solidarity with Jewish students at St Peter's College and the University of Oxford as a whole,
 - b. Condemns the actions of St Peter's College in the strongest possible terms,
 - c. And urges students from this JCR to boycott all future events at the University of Oxford which involve Ken Loach without sufficient regard for his history of antisemitism, in line with the wishes of St Peter's JCR
2. Encourage students of the JCR to take up Antisemitism Awareness Training and to proactively educate themselves on the antisemitism experienced by Jewish people

PROPOSER:

- As the motion and the appendices indicate, this disregard for the welfare of the St. Peter's and JSoc community is unacceptable; from the online harassment, to the lack of sensitive handling from college officials.

- This is a reminder for us, the St. Anne's community, to reflect on our own practices and see how we can make our college a safer and more welcoming environment for Jewish Students.
- We need to uphold our previous commitments against antisemitism and take proactive action to aid our understanding of concerns from the Jewish members of our community (such as through antisemitism awareness training)
- This situation has been extremely damaging to the Jewish community
- This is not a political discussion about 'cancel culture', but a concern for the welfare of these students and the mishandling of the situation by college officials.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is the JCR aware of the apology which has been released?
 - a. Recognizes the release of the apology, however the consensus is that there is still a very long way to go before university officials recognize how much damage has been done.
 - b. An apology does not negate the fact that preventable harm has been committed and needs to be proactively addressed and learned from.
2. In addition to the contents of this motion, would it be possible for the JCR, along with the college staff, to review and improve (if necessary) the college's policy on reporting & dealing with antisemitism?
 - a. The JCR committee will look into this via Equalities and Welfare channels. New harassment policies from both college and the university have recently been released. We will be reviewing these amendments.

DEBATE:

- 1) Supporting the motion:
 - a. Maybe it would be a good idea to suggest to St. Peter's College that they donate a sum of money to a charity that fights antisemitism.
 - i. Sanaa to include this suggestion in her statement on behalf of the JCR
 - b. We need to remember how much of a burden this has been for Jewish students who have been asked to prove that Ken Loach is antisemitic or carry the debate of 'cancel culture'. In future, we should be sure to frame this discussion not as intellectual endeavour, but as a question of welfare.
- 2) Against the motion:
 - a. -

VOTE:

For: 49
Abstain: 0
Against: 1

The motion has passed.

APPENDIX A - Ken Loach's Previous Comments

- When asked about a conference fringe event at which Miko Peled suggested people should be allowed to question whether the Holocaust had happened, Ken Loach suggested that the historical fact of the Holocaust is debatable by responding "History is for all of us to discuss. All history is our common heritage to discuss and analyse." Continuing: "The founding of the state of Israel, for example, based on ethnic cleansing, is there for us all to discuss, so don't try and subvert that by false stories of antisemitism".
 - This is in breach of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism (which was adopted by the University of Oxford in December 2020) by way of enabling discourse that accuses the Jews of exaggerating or inventing the Holocaust, by drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis and deflecting issues of Jewish suffering to contemporary actions of the State of Israel, and of denying Jews their right to self-determination by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
- On antisemitism in the Labour Party, Loach has said "their aim is to destabilise Jeremy's leadership... there is no validity whatsoever."
 - The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that claiming that antisemitism was exaggerated, fabricated, or used as a smear campaign, was one of the violations the party was guilty of in the prevalence of antisemitism within the party.
- In response to a rise in antisemitism in Europe, Loach said "If there has been a rise [in antisemitism] I am not surprised. In fact, it is perfectly understandable because Israel feeds feelings of antisemitism."
 - This holds Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel, in breach of the IHRA definition of antisemitism
 - This also blames Jews for the discrimination which they face in society.

APPENDIX B - St Peter's JCR Motion

"The JCR notes that:

1. Ken Loach has a history of blatant antisemitism. Per the IHRA definition of antisemitism, Loach has repeatedly made comments which:
 1. Allude to '*... the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions*'
 2. '*Accus[e] the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.*'
 3. '*... [claim] that the State of Israel is a racist endeavour*'
 4. '*[draw] comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis*'
2. The leadership of St Peter's College, when meeting Jewish students concerned about the impact of the platforming of someone with such abhorrent views:
 1. Claimed to be unaware of Loach's past comments, despite their being widely reported in the media and widely accessible online
 2. Sought to downplay the prospect of Loach's invitation being actively harmful to the college community, suggesting that the event featuring him would 'set aside' the controversy
 3. Asked Jewish Peterites not to view College as a place hostile to Jewish students since this would result in more discomfort
 4. Pushed Jewish Peterites to explain why downplaying the Holocaust is 'always' unequivocally antisemitic
 5. Put the burden of proving Loach's antisemitism onto Jewish Peterites when this is a matter of record, not opinion
 6. Suggested that St Peter's did not have a problem with antisemitism on account of the previous Master being Jewish
 7. Refused to disinvite Loach lest a PR fallout occur
 8. Refused to commit to taking any concrete steps to minimise the hurt that his invitation would inevitably cause.
3. The leadership of St Peter's College issued a statement on social media on Monday afternoon which:
 1. Failed to apologise for the entirely avoidable distress caused to Jewish students by its mishandling of this issue
 2. Sought to excuse Loach's antisemitism by pointing out that he had been invited to College many times before
 3. Failed to outline any steps which could be taken to avoid similar situations occurring in the future
4. Scores of British Jewish organisations have condemned St Peter's College for its invitation of Ken Loach, its failure to engage with Jewish students and its refusal to apologise, including but not limited to the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Union of Jewish Students and Oxford University JSoc
5. St Peter's College, unlike many other colleges, failed to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day this year.

This JCR believes that:

1. St Peter's College failed in its duty of care to Jewish students in inviting a known apologist for antisemitism without prior student consultation.
2. The College's failure to apologise for its insensitive and ignorant handling of Jewish students' concerns caused even more harm to Jewish students who were left feeling antagonised and unwelcome
3. The Master's and College's statements to students and the public added fuel to the fire
4. It is impossible to separate Ken Loach's filmmaking from his views, including his offensive history of antisemitic remarks
5. St Peter's College has failed to live by its commitment to 'stand against all forms of discrimination'
6. A 'free and open academic community' is mutually exclusive with the platforming of individuals whose bigoted views cause active harm to others on account of their protected characteristics.

This JCR:

1. **Urges** all students to boycott this event so as not to lend credence and authority to the views of a noted antisemite, and to prevent their further dissemination
2. **Condemns in the strongest terms** the College leadership's decision to go ahead with this event, disregarding the concerns and welfare of Jewish students in favour of preventing a 'PR disaster'
3. **Deplores in the strongest terms** the College's and Master's inconsiderate and insensitive response to such concerns, noting that such a response caused even greater suffering
4. **Offers its most sincere apologies** on behalf of the College to all Jewish students, whether Peterites or not, and to anyone whom the College leadership's ineptitude has caused distress and pain
5. **Pledges its active support** to all Jewish students who have been let down by St Peter's and by the University, and
6. **Stands in solidarity** with Jewish students at St Peter's and in Oxford in the face of endemic antisemitism more broadly."