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Ben Weich

September 12, 2018

Organisations distance themselves from 'letter from Charedi rabbis' defending Corbyn

The letter, posted in strictly Orthodox shuls over the High Holy Days, challenged 'reports that the Jews in Britain are united against the Labour leader'



The letter was ostensibly written as a rebuke of Jeremy Corbyn's critics

A letter defending Jeremy Corbyn, signed by 28 leading Charedi rabbis, has been circulated in London's strictly-Orthodox community – although some have argued the rabbis were misled over its content.

The letter, circulated in Hebrew over the High Holy Days, railed against “those who are spreading reports that the Jews in Britain are united against” the Labour leader.

But after it became public, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (UOHC), an umbrella organisation representing Charedi shuls, distanced itself from the letter.

Three rabbis – Rabbis Eliyakim Schlesinger, Azriel Schechter and Ze'ev Feldman – confirmed to the *JC* they had signed it, although a senior official at the UOHC described the letter as “fake news”.

But the *JC* understands that some of the purported signatories were not told its full contents when asked to put their names to it, with some believing it only concerned Israeli politics.



The 'fake' letter was purportedly signed by 28 leaders of the UK's Charedi community
(Photo: Getty Images)

Naftoli Friedman, a member of the Charedi community who was involved in acquiring signatories, said the letter was real.

He was speaking after the Jewish Community Council of North London (JCC), a nascent community group based in Stamford Hill, tweeted: “We would like to confirm and clarify this letter is fake and bears no authority from any of the assigned names.”

The letter condemned reports that “Jews are considering leaving Britain out of concern that [Mr Corbyn] may be elected as Prime Minister” – referring to the results of a *JC* poll published last week.

According to a translation by the *If You Tickle Us* blog, it read: “We therefore publicise our views that we are in no way associated with these aforementioned irresponsible activities.

“Jews who are loyal to God and His Torah seek the peace of the state in which they reside and treat her leaders with respect and, God forbid, we would never contemplate antagonising

political leaders.”

It was published after Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks said Mr Corbyn's remarks about British Zionists were “the most offensive statement made by a senior British politician” since Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech.

In July, a group of 68 British rabbis from across the denominational spectrum signed an unprecedented letter urging the Labour Party “to listen to the Jewish community” and adopt the full International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

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