



LUKE AKEHURST

An Israel War Crimes Apologist Whose
Parliamentary Candidacy **MUST be Opposed!**

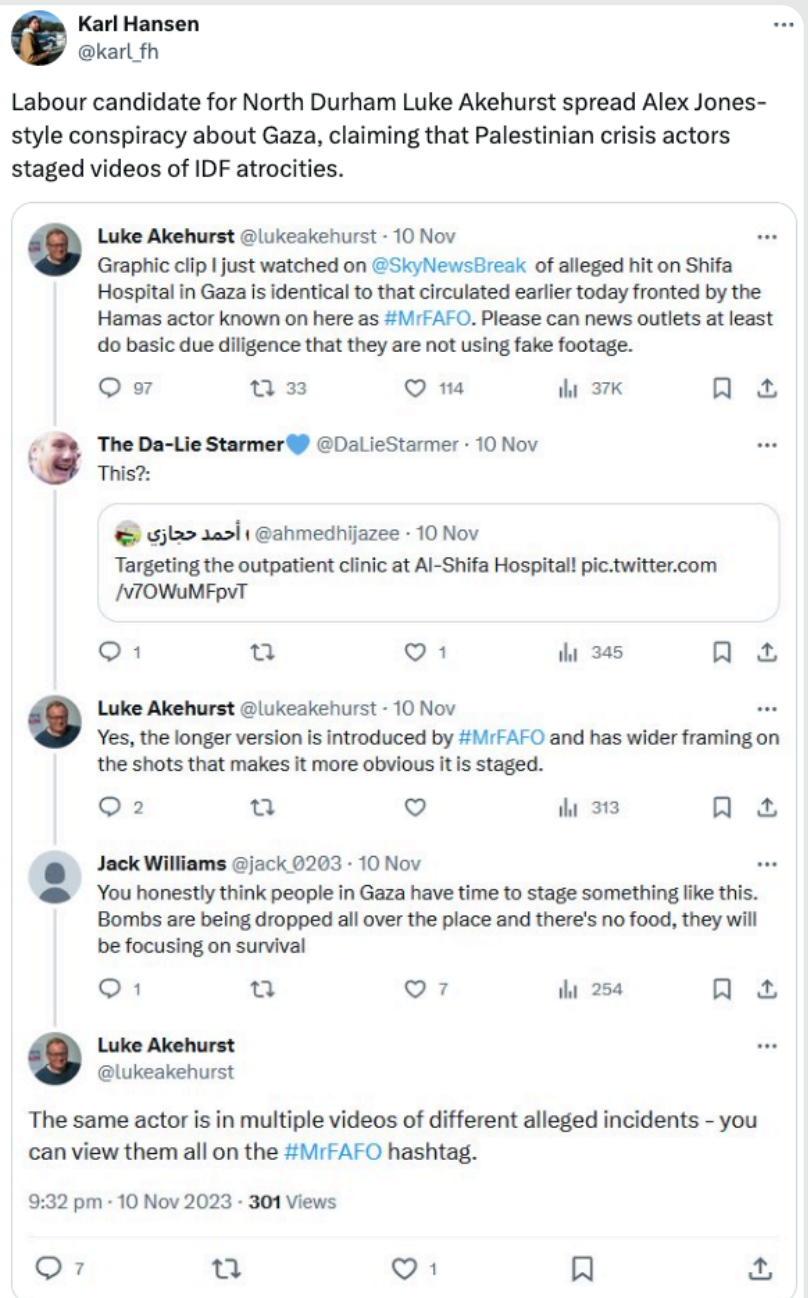


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Luke Akehurst: An Israel War Crimes Apologist Whose Parliamentary Candidacy MUST be Opposed!

Sir Keir Starmer has placed an obscure figure called Luke Akehurst in the Labour safe seat of North Durham to run in the upcoming election. Akehurst has a long history in the Labour Party, including sitting on its influential National Executive Committee (NEC) and as its councillor in Hackney for 12 years from 2002 ¹. However, Akehurst's candidacy in North Durham is extremely problematic because he has a long past of lobbying British politics on behalf of Israeli state interests while playing down the mass atrocities committed by its forces against innocent Palestinians.

It was widely reported that in the days leading up to his selection, Akehurst was busy frantically deleting a large volume of his old Tweets which expressed dangerous anti-Palestinian sentiment. Clearly Akehurst knew the content was controversial enough to get him, and possibly Keir Starmer, into trouble. However, some managed to screenshot a limited number of the Tweets before they could be deleted. In one such Tweet, Akehurst tried to peddle the far-right "Pallywood" conspiracy theory that footage showing Israel's bombardment of Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital in November 2023 was staged and the victims were "actors." Akehurst's willingness to use a right-wing conspiracy theory to deny that Israeli forces are committing atrocities against Gazans raises serious questions about his moral suitability to stand as an MP.

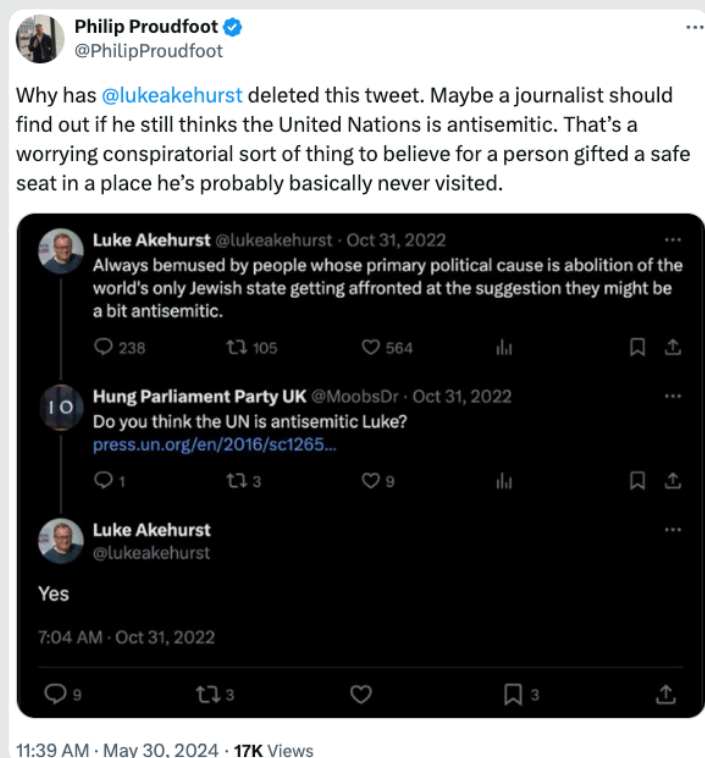


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1. Rowena Mason. 2024. *Luke Akehurst: Who is Labour Activist Turned Controversial Candidate?* 31 May, accessed 3 June 2024, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/may/31/luke-akehurst-labour-activist-turned-controversial-election-candidate>

In the past, he has also held workshops on how to “combat” pro-Palestine activism and the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions movement ². Akehurst has also played the well-worn card of conflating criticism of Israeli state policy with antisemitism. For example, he obscenely condemned the UN as antisemitic because of the Security Council’s insistence that Israeli settlements built on stolen Palestinian land are illegal under international law. By that standard, the UK Foreign Office, the US State Department, the International Court of Justice, Amnesty International and numerous other bodies would be considered antisemitic as they too have all affirmed the illegality of the settlements under international law. Akehurst, a self-described “Zionist shitlord” ³, has also long defended Israel’s use of military force as proportionate, contrary to the opinion of UN rights officials, who have characterised it as “genocide” ⁴.

Since 2011 Akehurst has also been the Director of the lobbying group, We Believe in Israel (WBI) ⁵. He had previously told a journalist that, “it was almost my dream job to run a pro-Israel campaigning organisation” ⁶. Prior to his joining WBI, he worked as a defence specialist for Weber Shandwick, where some have claimed he was a “promoter for the arms industry” ⁷. WBI grew out of the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM), which has been described as “Britain’s most active



2. Asa Winstanley. 2016. *How Jeremy Corbyn's Enemies are Gunning for Labour's Ruling Body*. The Electronic Intifada. 11 May, accessed 2 June 2024, available at: <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/how-jeremy-corbyns-enemies-are-gunning-labours-ruling-body>

Mick Napier. 2019. *Attendance at Israeli Embassy Glasgow Anti-BDS Workshop*. Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign. 15 June, accessed 3 June 2024, available at: <https://www.scottishpsc.org.uk/the-opposition/1934-israeli-embassy-ran-a-glasgow-anti-bds-workshop>

3. @OfSymbols Twitter. 2024. 28 May, accessed 2 June 2024, available at: <https://x.com/OfSymbols/status/1795374158416929120>

4. Imogen Foulkes. 2024. *Gaza War: UN Rights Expert Accuses Israel of Acts of Genocide*. BBC News. 26 March, accessed 2 June 2024, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68667556>

5. We Believe in Israel. *Our Team*. Accessed 2 June 2024, available at: https://www.webelieveinisrael.org.uk/our_team

6. Doreen Wachmann. *Why Non-Jewish Luke's Family Has Always Given Support to Israel*. Jewish Telegraph. Accessed 2 June 2024, available at: http://www.jewishtelegraph.com/prof_247.html

7. David Cronin. 2011. *Arms Industry Promoter Latest Recruit for UK Israel Lobby*. Electronic Intifada. 23 August, accessed 3 June 2024, available at: <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/david-cronin/arms-industry-promoter-latest-recruit-uk-israel-lobby>

pro-Israeli lobbying organisation”⁸. BICOM has received over a billion pounds in donations from a tycoon whose father made his fortune manufacturing weapons in Israel and selling them to repressive regimes around the world⁹. BICOM is known to have intimate connections with the Israeli government and according to reports works to “label those who criticise the Israeli state and its supporters as prejudice or antisemitic, in an attempt to isolate them”¹⁰. One major piece of research into BICOM describes it as “an opaque organisation that carried out much of its work beyond public scrutiny and accountability”¹¹. A groundbreaking investigation by Al-Jazeera revealed intimate connections between Akehurst and Israeli state actors¹². In one scene secretly filmed in a London cafe, an undercover reporter filmed Israeli diplomat Shai Masot (who has long been suspected of working for Israeli intelligence), describing Akehurst’s role in WBI and as a pro-Israel force in the Labour Party, calling him “a great friend” and “one of the best on the [Labour] inside,” adding “seriously, there is not a lot of people like him”¹³. It was also shown that Akehurst planned to attend a Labour Friends of Palestine meeting to “take notes” for BICOM’S use¹⁴. He also tried to get Spotify to remove the music of British-Iraqi rapper and activist, Lowkey, claiming that the names of some of his songs, such as Long Live Palestine, were “offensive”¹⁵.

8. Rajeev Syal. 2009. How the Pro-Israel Lobby in Britain Benefits from a Generous London Tycoon. The Guardian. 4 January, accessed 3 June 2024, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/04/biscom-israel-lobby-poju-zabludowicz>

9. Ibid.

Tom Mills. David Miller. Tom Griffin. Hilary Ake. 2013. The Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre: Giving Peace a Chance? MEMO Publishers. 6 November, accessed 2 June 2024m available at: <https://www.memo-publishers.com/publications/the-britain-israel-communications-and-research-centre-giving-peace-a-chance/>

10. Amelia Smith. 2014. Report Review: The Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre: Giving Peace a Chance? 10 May, accessed 2 June 2024, available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20140510-report-review-the-britain-israel-communications-and-research-centre-giving-peace-a-chance/>

11. Tom Mills. David Miller. Tom Griffin. Hilary Ake. 2013. The Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre: Giving Peace a Chance? MEMO Publishers. 6 November, accessed 2 June 2024m available at: <https://www.memo-publishers.com/publications/the-britain-israel-communications-and-research-centre-giving-peace-a-chance/>

12. Al-Jazeera. 2017. The Lobby. Accessed June 3, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/investigations/2017/1/11/the-lobby-the-training-session-part-2>

13. @RaggedTP Twitter. 2020. 2 December, accessed 3 June, available at: <https://x.com/RaggedTP/status/1333968068788228097>

14. John Mcevoy. 2024. Luke Akehurst: Arch Israel Lobbyist Picked for Labour Safe Seat. Declassified UK. 30 May, accessed 2 June 2024, available at: <https://www.declassifieduk.org/luke-akehurst-arch-israel-lobbyist-picked-for-labour-safe-seat/>

15. @LowkeyOnline Twitter. 2024. 30 May, accessed 2 June 2024, available at: <https://x.com/LowkeyOnline/status/1796103107929051588>



Oppose Luke Akehurst

Image Source: x.com/lukeakehurst

It should be of deep concern to all that, considering Akehurst's record, he has been gifted the North Durham safe seat by Keir Starmer. What makes this worse is that on the same day that Akehurst's selection was announced, the deselection of Faiza Shaheen - a Muslim woman of colour - from running as a Labour candidate in Chingford and Woodford Green was made public. According to reports, part of the reason that Labour removed Ms Shaheen's Labour candidacy was because of social media posts that she had liked criticising the suppression of pro-Palestine speech. In other words, Ms Shaheen was punished for shining a light on this injustice, while Mr Akehurst, an enforcer of it, was given a Labour safe seat. This once again shows how out of touch the Labour leadership appears to be with large numbers of voters who are outraged by its failure to take the morally right position when it comes to Israel-Palestine. In fact, what it appears to demonstrate is Keir Starmer's willingness to embrace the pro-Israel right-wing of his party.

Luke Akehurst's candidacy is a dangerous development, and when looking at his past efforts to quash gestures of solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine, it is clear that he would not have the free speech of his constituents at heart; we **MUST** speak out against him and oppose his candidacy.



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