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**“I cannot look into [Jeremy Corbyn’s] heart and say he is personally an anti-Semite  
but I can say that he presides over it,” says Julia Neuberger**

“I cannot look into [Jeremy Corbyn’s] heart and say he is personally an anti-Semite but I can say that he presides over it,” said Julia Neuberger today at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. The Rabbi, writer and cross bench House of Lords Peer was speaking with cleric and writer Richard Holloway about her book *Anti-Semitism: What It Is. What It Isn’t. Why It Matters*.

Neuberger, Britain’s second female rabbi, spoke of the anti-Semitism scandal in the Labour Party and argued that it had not yet been resolved; “The disciplinary processes have taken forever. When the Labour Party had said it’s going to speed them up - if that’s speeding them up what would slowing them down look like? So I think there’s a real issue of the speed of dealing with the complaints.

“But the other part of it is much more serious and that’s the lack of real recognition of how serious it is and how commonplace it is. And I don’t think I fully believed it until I started looking at the tweets.

“It’s vicious and vitriolic and it’s not being dealt with. Part of that is not for the Labour Party to deal with because they can’t unless they can identify people, but they can deal with it by saying this is totally unacceptable. And if you really wanted to deal with it as the Labour Party, you would be standing up and saying, anybody who makes that kind of anti-Semitic comment is out right now. We’ll deal with disciplinary process but you’re out right now.

“This stuff has come since Jeremy Corbyn has been leader of Labour. Now I cannot look into his heart and say he is personally an anti-Semite but I can say that he presides over it. And that seems to me really serious.”

Neuberger was asked about the motion proposed by John McDonnell and co-sponsored by Jeremy Corbyn on Holocaust Memorial Day in 2011 to rename the day ‘Genocide Memorial Day’.

“I thought it was really stupid apart from anything else.” She said. “I thought it was almost certainly tinged with anti-Semitism. I know that quite a lot of people feel that Holocaust Memorial Day should be even more inclusive than it already is of other genocides. Do I think it was wholly anti-Semitic? No. Do I think it was completely idiotic? Yes.

“I don’t think that John McDonnell is an anti-Semite per se. And I can’t see into Jeremy Corbyn’s heart - I just don’t know but would you, if you were going to do that, choose that day to run an early day motion? And I think that was at best extremely insensitive and at worst anti-Semitic. Until I can look into their hearts, I can’t be absolutely clear. I have a feeling, and it can only be that, that it veers towards anti-Semitism.”

“I think that it is more rife in the Labour Party by... people using their Labour membership or Labour affiliation and putting that anti-Semitism with it, than in other parties. I can’t say there are more anti-Semites in the Labour Party than in any other party.”

“Is there serious anti-Semitism on the right? Of course there is. Is there anti-Semitism elsewhere in society? Yes of course there is.

“But in the association of people saying I’m Labour and this, then I think at the moment you can say yes, it is more prevalent.

“If Jeremy Corbyn stood up and really said, we’re having this, you’re out and this attitude is unacceptable,” She added. “I think it would change and it might change quite rapidly. But until that happens, I think you’re seeing that association quite closely.

“Some of that does come from a Stalinist tradition which has very much come back into the Labour Party.”

Neuberger also discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and some of the criticisms she has for the Israeli government.

“I’m very shocked by Israel’s decision to pass what was called the Nationality Law last year, which has pretty little effect in real terms but as a statement says everybody who isn’t Jewish is a second class citizen. I think that is deeply, deeply shocking and not acceptable.

“I do think there is stuff we can do, and the stuff we can do, because Arabic has now been given a special status rather an equal status with Hebrew in Israel, is promote Arabic.

“Can we do things? Yes, but at the moment it’s small scale because there isn’t much energy in it.

“The other thing of course, is real encouragement of Israeli Arabs to take more of a role in the professions. And that’s a change that is happening.”

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement was also discussed, with Neuberger claiming that it “becomes part of anti-Semitism”.

“It has turned out to be idiotic, because the worst feature of it is that those Israeli academics and people in NGOs who disagree with the Israeli government have been stopped from speaking on UK university campuses and that has to be ridiculous. However, is it anti-Semitic in itself? No it’s not. Does it morph into anti-Semitism? Yes it does.

“I do not think economic pressure is going to be the answer. If you were going to put economic pressure on it would have to be very, very specific. I think there needs to be political pressure from other countries in the Middle East and I think there has to be political pressure probably from the United States... that isn’t going to happen at the moment.”