Save the Children pledged to root out anti-Semitism. Insiders say nothing has changed

Jewish staff left 'fearful and intimidated' by charity's failure to act on report's recommendation, claim critics

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Save the Children has been accused of failing to tackle anti-Semitism and anti-Israel prejudice within its ranks, despite a damning report urging

urgent action on the issue.

Critics have accused some staff and trustees at the charity of pursuing an ongoing campaign against Israel.

An independent review commissioned by Save the Children UK (SCUK), which examined both anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim prejudice, warned last year that Jewish people working at the charity had been made to feel unsafe and intimidated.

Advertisement

Save the Children, one of Britain's most respected charities, has now been accused of disproportionately singling out Israel for criticism while minimising the responsibility of other armed groups in conflict zones.

The charity, whose patron is the Princess Royal, has campaigned against the Government's licensing of arms sales to Israel.



A demonstrator carries a Save the Children placard calling for a ceasefire in Gaza

Whistleblowers and Jewish groups said that the failure to tackle anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli prejudice has left Jewish staff fearful and intimidated.

They have also condemned the charity's decision not to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism, which is recognised by the UK Government, nor implement a dedicated ban on the use of the term Zionist or Nazi analogies.

The charity instead relies on the Equality Act, Acas guidelines and its existing staff code of conduct.

The report's authors, consultants Global HPO (GHPO), found in March last year that "there appears to be a lack of appreciation and understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism in the workplace, and lack of consideration on language and tone by a lot of individuals, including those that hold senior management positions".

"In turn, the impact felt by those who are Jewish, and their colleagues hasn't been fully understood, and people have been unable to speak about

some of their experiences until now in an independent review," the report added.

"Specifically, fear is significant amongst Jewish people within SCUK and their outside communities over the last year, and they feel unsafe within SCUK due to the handling of several issues and language that has been used around the issue."



Save the Children workers distributing aid in Gaza

The report recommended that staff strongly "resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons" when discussing the Gaza war and the wider Israel-Palestine conflict.

It also urged staff not to use Zionist as a code word for Jewish people, and to only use the term Zionist "advisedly, carefully and never euphemistically or as part of personal abuse".

But the charity decided not to introduce a bespoke policy on the use of Nazi and Holocaust metaphors or the use of the term Zionist, stating that these concerns were already governed by its existing code of conduct and communications guidelines.

It also rejected the report's suggestion that it adopt the IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism.



Save the Children declined to introduce a bespoke policy on the use of Nazi or Holocaust metaphors in relation to Israel's actions in Gaza, where displaced children are living in tents Credit: Getty Images/Omar Ashtawy

Jon Pearce, a Labour MP and the UK's special envoy for post-Holocaust issues, told The Telegraph: "The IHRA definition is the internationally recognised benchmark for identifying anti-Semitism.

"You cannot tackle a problem you are unwilling to identify, and Save the Children's failure so far to adopt it is a deeply troubling indication of a wider cultural problem and a serious failure of leadership.

"It is sad to see where an organisation once held in such high regard has fallen. The independent report raises fundamental questions about whether Jewish staff can expect the same dignity, respect and equality as their colleagues.

"If it cannot guarantee that, how can it be trusted to fulfil its charitable objectives? I hope the Charity Commission will step in."

Save the Children pointed to its adoption of many of the report's recommendations as a sign of fundamental changes within the organisation. These included increased training to professionalise the way

colleagues from different faiths and backgrounds communicate with each other and working to ensure “staff abide by existing communications guidelines”.

But one former employee, who submitted a detailed dossier of examples to the authors of the report, claimed that anti-Israel attitudes within the charity’s leadership and campaign teams appeared not to have changed since its publication more than 18 months ago.



Hamas militants carry a captured Israeli civilian into the Gaza Strip during the massacre of Oct 7 2023 Credit: AP Photo/Hatem Ali

The former member of staff said Save the Children publications and public statements always named Israel when attributing blame, but were far less specific when it came to conflict elsewhere.

They cited a statement issued on the first anniversary of the Oct 7 attacks in which the charity said that 37 Israeli children were killed by “Palestinian armed groups”, without naming Hamas.

It said in the same post that more than 14,000 children had been killed by “Israeli bombs, airstrikes and bullets”.

Similarly, in response to the January 2025 ceasefire, Save the Children explicitly named Hamas as reaching an agreement with Israel, but in the

same sentence attributed the Oct 7 attacks to “Palestinian armed groups”.

This adhered to standard United Nations and humanitarian reporting conventions, which frequently use the blanket legal phrase “Palestinian armed groups” to encompass Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and others.

However the former staff member, who asked to remain anonymous, told The Telegraph: “This echoes concerns about different standards of attribution – Israel is named directly, while Hamas is described generically. The wording is notable because Hamas is clearly named when discussing negotiations but not when attributing the October 7 attack. Why?”



A Palestinian child killed in an Israeli air strike is brought to a Gaza City hospital on Tuesday, Nov 3 Credit: Getty Images/Omar Ashtewi

In a press release about Yemen published on Sept 15 this year, Save The Children reported dozens of children killed and injured by bombs, shelling and drones without identifying the armed forces responsible.

Yet its statements on the Gaza conflict regularly name “Israeli forces”, “Israeli authorities” and “Israel’s atrocities”.

In June, Save The Children issued a press release on Ukraine, which described deadly attacks and said “all parties” must comply with

humanitarian law, without naming Russia.

While it has named and condemned Russian forces in other statements, the former staff member claimed that such inconsistencies were evidence of Israel receiving “unusually political and accusatory treatment compared with other conflicts”.

‘Intense political campaigning’

A Save the Children press release in March last year did name Hamas as responsible for the death of 1,200 people, including 36 children, on Oct 7, and highlighted the murder of two Israeli child hostages.

But it went on to accuse the UK Government of being allied to multiple Israeli atrocities in Gaza through its supply of arms, including parts for F-35 fighter jets, whose missiles disproportionately impact children.

The former employee argued that Save the Children had used its social media channels to urge supporters to contact MPs and lobby the Prime Minister over Israeli settlements.

Critics say the Israel-Palestine conflict “receives a particularly intense level of political campaigning” compared to other conflicts, such as Yemen and Ukraine.

A Save the Children manager responsible until recently for running its campaigns has called for Israel to be replaced with one state as the solution to the conflict.



Benali Hamdache's call for a one-state solution has been described as a 'final solution for Israeli Jews' Credit: Getty Images/Ming Yeung

Benali Hamdache, who was the charity's head of campaigns and organising until May, and is now a Green councillor for Islington and a London Assembly member, told a Sky News panel last month that "a one-state solution could be delivered in a peaceful, democratic, [way]".

Mr Hamdache told the panel: "It's something that represents and respects the rights of everyone, Jews and Arabs alike, to live peacefully together."

But supporters of Israel argue this ignores the historic persecution of Jewish people and their desire for a safe homeland following the Holocaust and the expulsion of Jewish populations across the Middle East.

Alex Hearn, the co-director of Labour Against Antisemitism, told The Telegraph: "On Oct 7, 2023, Hamas showed the world that the reality of a one-state solution is a final solution for Israeli Jews.

"It therefore seems remarkable that [someone who was until recently] a senior Save the Children staffer would be so offensively cavalier when it comes to the lives of children from the world's only Jewish state."

Critics allege that some staff and trustees of the charity have urged supporters to become actively involved in pro-Palestine campaigns against

the policies of the Jewish state.



Kajal Odedra, a non-executive Save the Children board member, urged people on social media to join protests against Israel's military offensive in Gaza

Within three weeks of the Oct 7 attacks by Hamas, Kajal Odedra, a non-executive board member of Save the Children UK, posted on social media a pack of campaign material, urging people to join protests against Israel's military offensive in Gaza.

The charity's repeated opposition to British arms sales to Israel and criticism of the Jewish state's policies has prompted a political backlash.

In August, Baroness Chapman of Darlington, a Foreign Office minister, accused Save the Children UK of being "divisive, provocative, factually inaccurate" on social media.

It came after the charity criticised Sir Keir Starmer, the outgoing prime minister, accusing him in a LinkedIn and X post published on July 14 of "complicity" in enabling "Israel's atrocities against Palestinians".

Save the Children UK
511,665 followers
3mo ·

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This is your legacy on the occupied Palestinian territory, Prime Minister Keir Starmer. History will remember your complicity.

Despite a partial arms suspension in 2024, Keir Starmer's government has continued to enable Israel's atrocities against Palestinians, their families and children through the supply of F-35 fighter jet parts.

Nothing can change the horrors Palestinians have faced. But the next Prime Minister has an opportunity to put an end to the UK Government's role as an ally to atrocities.

The UK Government must:
- Suspend all arms sales to Israel
- Suspend the UK-Israel trade and partnership agreement
- Ban trade with illegal Israeli settlements

To the next Prime Minister: what will your plaque say?





The charity's social media post accused Sir Keir Starmer of 'complicity' for failing to block arms sales to Israel

The charity produced a photograph of a mocked-up blue plaque reading: "History will not forget complicity: Keir Starmer witnesses 73,000 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces, including 21,000 children, and kept supplying arms to Israel."

Lady Chapman told the Lords: "I think there's been an unfortunate use of social media by Save the Children, which I think is divisive, provocative, factually inaccurate. We should all be conducting ourselves in a way that is respectful and grounded in substance."

The Charity Commission confirmed that it was examining the post for any breaches of charity law.

A spokesman for the regulator said: "We have an ongoing regulatory compliance case to examine concerns raised with us about a social media post by Save the Children UK. As part of this, we are engaging with the charity's trustees, which will help determine any regulatory response."

Save the Children has defended its response to the GHPO report's recommendations, saying it had taken on board many of them.

The charity said: "We have continued to use what we learned from the review to shape how we ensure we create a safe and inclusive working environment for all colleagues.

"Directors will continue to have training on leading and embedding measures to ensure Save the Children UK is an inclusive and supportive place to work."



Palestinians, including children, gather around a water truck distributing supplies in Gaza City Credit: Getty Images/Omar Ashtawy

On its decisions to reject the report's recommendations to adopt the IHRA's definition of anti-Semitism and introduce a policy on Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, Save the Children stated: "In consultation with staff equality networks, Save the Children's leadership agreed we will use the Equality Act and Acas guidance on race and religion or belief discrimination.

"On the question around use of Nazi and Holocaust metaphors and the use of the term Zionist, the recommendation was around their usage rather than for the establishment of a policy. We agreed and this was in line with our existing communications guidelines and code of conduct, which colleagues are expected to follow and which we continue to implement."

Charity defends pressure on Government

Save the Children UK has also defended its social media campaign on Gaza.

George Graham, the charity's executive director of global impact, said: "In 2025, Israeli armed and security forces were responsible for one in four of all verified grave violations against children globally.

"The UK remained Israel's ally throughout. Our campaign has focused on pushing the UK Government to take action and help stop these atrocities. This stands in stark contrast to the active measures the UK Government has taken in relation to Sudan and Ukraine, for example.

"We are deeply sad and sorry that colleagues experienced any form of hatred – whether anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hate or other – in the workplace, as was found in the review we commissioned in 2024.

"We are utterly committed to tackling all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism. All colleagues should feel valued and respected and able to offer their best with confidence and safety."

Additional reporting by William Jeffs

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