

British prime minister pledges to protect Israel, Jews in dig at Corbyn



London, September 19 (RHC)-- British Prime Minister Theresa May has pledged to protect British Jews and what she called "Israel's right to defend itself" in what appeared to be a veiled attack on Jeremy Corbyn, who has been accused of tolerating anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

Addressing a dinner held by the United Jewish Israel Appeal, which works to build links between British Jews and Israel, May said she was "sickened" by the idea that some Jews had doubt whether Britain was a safe place to raise their children.

"I have come here tonight as prime minister of our country to say that I stand with you," she told the crowd. "I stand with the UJIA. I stand with Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. And I stand with the entire Jewish community in Britain."

The Labour Party has been mired in rows over what critics describe as its failure to address anti-Semitism among party supporters and its initial reluctance to fully adopt a broader definition of anti-Semitism.

Corbyn, a veteran campaigner for Palestinian rights, has come under attack for criticizing the Israeli

regime's policies, which some view as being anti-Semitic. The Labour leader argued earlier this year that party members should be allowed to criticize Israel.

In August, Britain's former chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks labeled Corbyn anti-Semite and said his 2013 comments about Zionists were the most offensive by a senior British politician in half a century.

Corbyn said five years ago, before he was Labour's leader, that British Zionists "don't understand English irony" despite "having lived in this country for a very long time."

"If we are to stand up for the values that we share - then one of the things we need to do is give young Jewish people the confidence to be proud of their identity – as British, Jewish and Zionist too," May said.

In a barely coded message to Corbyn, the prime minister said: "Let me be clear: you cannot claim to be tackling racism, if you are not tackling anti-Semitism." Furthermore, May said she was committed to strong economic ties between London and Tel Aviv.

"You can also count on my commitment to Israel's security," she said. "I am clear that we will always support Israel's right to defend itself."

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