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Diane Abbott Says Labour Leadership Wants Her Out Amid Suspension Over Racism Comments

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Diane Abbott, the longest-serving female Member of Parliament (MP) for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, has accused the Labour Party leadership of wanting her expelled following her suspension over remarks about racism. Abbott's suspension means she currently sits as an independent MP, having lost the party whip while an investigation into

her comments continues. The controversy reignited after her recent interview on BBC's *Newsnight*, where she defended her views on different forms of racism.

In 2023, Abbott was suspended for a year after writing a letter to the *Observer* newspaper in which she claimed that Irish, Jewish, and Traveller communities experience prejudice “similar to racism.” She clarified that while groups like redheads might face discrimination, it was not the same as racism based on skin colour. The remarks sparked criticism from Jewish and Traveller groups, leading Abbott to withdraw the comments and apologise for any distress caused. She was reinstated to Labour just before last year's general election.

During the BBC interview with James Naughtie, Abbott reiterated that she does not regret her comments. She stressed that racism based on skin colour is distinct because it is immediately visible, unlike other forms of prejudice. “You can see a black person walking down the street,” she said, “but you don't know a Traveller or Jewish person unless you speak with them.” She called it “silly” to equate all forms of racism, underscoring her view that different types of discrimination exist.

Abbott shared a clip of the interview on social media but did not initially comment. She later issued a statement to *BBC Newsnight* asserting that her remarks were “factually correct, as any fair-minded person would accept.” The Labour Party declined to comment on the ongoing investigation.

Deputy Labour leader Angela Rayner condemned antisemitism within the party, emphasising that processes exist to deal with such issues. Rayner criticised Abbott for doubling down on her original remarks after previously expressing regret. Meanwhile, former Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell defended Abbott on social media, urging the public and party officials to listen carefully to her full interview before concluding. McDonnell highlighted Abbott's longstanding commitment to fighting all forms of racism, including antisemitism.

When asked directly about condemning antisemitism, Abbott affirmed her opposition, pointing out her lifetime of activism against racial prejudice. She attributed part of her focus to the demographics of her diverse London constituency.

Abbott's outspoken stance and long parliamentary career make her a prominent figure, but her relationship with Labour's current leadership remains strained. Her claim that the party is attempting to push her out reflects ongoing tensions within Labour over how to address

sensitive issues of race and discrimination. As the investigation unfolds, the case highlights the challenges political parties face when balancing free expression, party discipline, and public sensitivity on complex social matters.