

When ‘Context’ Becomes Exclusion: How an MP Was Barred from a School

13 January 2026

A response to the LBC segment featuring Damian Egan MP and Hamza Yusuf

Executive summary

A recent LBC segment concerning the cancellation of a school visit by Damian Egan MP exposed a deeper and more troubling issue than a single local dispute. A British-Palestinian journalist, introduced as such on air, argued that a democratically elected MP should be barred from speaking in a school solely because of his political affiliations with Israel, even though the visit was unrelated to Middle Eastern politics.

This report examines that argument, the historical and moral framing used to justify it, and what it reveals about a growing willingness to replace democratic norms with ideological gatekeeping.

1. What listeners were told

Listeners were first presented with a clear set of facts:

- Damian Egan, a Jewish Labour MP, was prevented from speaking at a school in his own constituency.
- The cancellation followed pressure from pro-Palestinian teachers and campaigners.
- The local branch of the National Education Union publicly celebrated the decision.

- Senior figures within the union have previously used the phrase “globalise the intifada”.
- The MP was not visiting to speak about Israel or Gaza, but about democracy and public life.

This was framed as a question of **impartiality in schools, freedom of expression, and democratic access**.

2. The counter-argument introduced on air

Hamza Yusuf, introduced as a “British-Palestinian journalist and writer”, rejected this framing outright.

His core position was unambiguous:

- There was “nothing wrong” with barring the MP.
- Schools are entitled to exclude speakers based on political affiliations.
- Association with Labour Friends of Israel was, in itself, disqualifying.
- Being “a friend of Israel” is morally comparable to supporting states or groups responsible for war crimes.

Crucially, this exclusion was justified **even though the MP was not speaking about Israel or Gaza**.

This is the central issue. Everything else in the exchange flows from it.

3. From impartiality to ideological veto

The principle advanced during the segment was not safeguarding. It was **ideological selection**.

Under the logic put forward:

- Teachers and unions may decide which MPs are morally fit to speak.
- Democratic mandate becomes secondary to political alignment.
- Schools cease to be neutral civic spaces and become sites of political enforcement.

Once accepted, this principle does not stop at Israel. It applies to any controversial issue, any future conflict, and any MP whose views offend the prevailing ideology of those in the room.

That is not impartiality. It is the abandonment of it.

4. The false equivalence at the heart of the argument

A recurring move throughout the segment was the attempted equivalence between:

- Support for Israel, a recognised sovereign state, and
- Support for Hamas or the events of 7 October.

This comparison fails on basic legal and moral grounds.

- Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation under UK law.
- Israel is a UN member state with diplomatic relations across the world.
- Supporting Hamas is a criminal matter.
- Supporting Israel is a mainstream political position held across all major UK parties.

Refusing to acknowledge this distinction is not nuance; it is ideological collapse.

5. Collapsing history into permanent guilt

Another defining feature of the segment was the claim that Israel has been criminal “for decades”, rendering all present-day association illegitimate.

This framing:

- Erases internal political dissent within Israel.
- Ignores changes in leadership, policy, and public opinion.
- Treats the state as irredeemably criminal by definition.

By explicitly dismissing Netanyahu as irrelevant and asserting that Israel’s “crimes predate him”, the argument moves beyond criticism of government policy and into **delegitimisation of the state itself**.

That distinction matters. One is political critique. The other is something else entirely.

6. The selective timeline problem

At no point in the segment were listeners reminded of:

- Pre-1947 intercommunal violence.
- The rejection of the UN partition plan.
- The 1948 invasion by neighbouring Arab states.
- Subsequent wars initiated by Arab states.
- The role of Hamas in governing Gaza and pursuing armed conflict.

Instead, history was compressed into phrases like “for decades”, with all agency placed on Israel alone.

This is not neutral analysis. It is selective storytelling.

7. Gaza as a moral override

Gaza was repeatedly used as a universal moral trump card:

- Present suffering was treated as invalidating all historical context.
- Any association with Israel was deemed indefensible because of current events.
- Democratic norms were implicitly suspended because children are dying.

Human suffering demands compassion. It does not justify the abandonment of principle.

8. The contradiction that exposes the weakness

When challenged with the obvious parallel – Britain's own violent and colonial history – the argument faltered.

If historical wrongdoing permanently disqualifies a state, then:

- Friends of Britain,
- Friends of France,
- Friends of the United States,

would all be morally suspect in schools.

The response was not a principled answer, but a retreat to “this moment” and “last year”.

That is not consistency. It is situational ethics.

9. What this segment ultimately showed

What listeners witnessed was not a debate about safeguarding or antisemitism. It

was an argument for **political exclusion**.

A journalist argued, on national radio, that:

- A Jewish MP could rightly be barred from a school,
- Because of lawful political affiliations,
- Even when the subject matter was unrelated,
- And even when the MP was democratically elected.

That position is incompatible with democratic education.

Conclusion

This episode should concern anyone who believes schools ought to model democratic values rather than police ideology.

Criticising Israeli policy is legitimate. Opposing war is legitimate. Advocating for Palestinians is legitimate.

But endorsing the exclusion of elected representatives from civic spaces based on political affiliation is not.

When that exclusion is justified through selective history, false equivalence, and the moral delegitimisation of the world's only Jewish state, it deserves careful, sober challenge - not applause.