



# Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, and Anti-Zionist Jews

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## **1. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Antisemitism**

### **About the IHRA non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism**

The IHRA is the only intergovernmental organization mandated to focus solely on Holocaust-related issues, so with evidence that the scourge of antisemitism is once again on the rise, we resolved to take a leading role in combating it. IHRA experts determined that in order to begin to address the problem of antisemitism, there must be clarity about what [antisemitism](#) is.

The IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial worked to build international consensus around a non-legally binding [working definition](#) of antisemitism, which was subsequently adopted by the Plenary. By doing so, the IHRA set an example of responsible conduct for other international fora and provided an important tool with practical applicability for its Member Countries. This is just one illustration of how the IHRA has equipped policymakers to address this rise in hate and discrimination at their national level.

Information on endorsement and adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism can be found [here](#).

### **The working definition of antisemitism**

In the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration that states: "With humanity still scarred by ...antisemitism and xenophobia the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils" the committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial called the IHRA Plenary in Budapest 2015 to adopt the following working definition of antisemitism.

On 26 May 2016, the Plenary in Bucharest decided to:

#### **Adopt the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism:**

**"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."**

To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with

conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

**Antisemitic acts are criminal** when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

**Criminal acts are antisemitic** when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

**Antisemitic discrimination** is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

## **2. The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism**

### **Preamble**

We, the undersigned, present the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, the product of an initiative that originated in Jerusalem. We include in our number international scholars working in Antisemitism Studies and related fields, including Jewish, Holocaust, Israel, Palestine, and Middle East Studies. The text of the Declaration has benefited from consultation with legal scholars and members of civil society.

Inspired by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1969 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the 2000 Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, and the 2005 United Nations Resolution on Holocaust Remembrance, we hold that while antisemitism has certain distinctive features, the fight against it is inseparable from the overall fight against all forms of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and gender discrimination.

Conscious of the historical persecution of Jews throughout history and of the universal lessons of the Holocaust, and viewing with alarm the reassertion of antisemitism by groups that mobilize hatred and violence in politics, society, and on the internet, we seek to provide a usable, concise, and historically-informed core definition of antisemitism with a set of guidelines.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism responds to “the IHRA Definition,” the document that was adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016. Because the IHRA Definition is unclear in key respects and widely open to different interpretations, it has caused confusion and generated controversy, hence weakening the fight against antisemitism. Noting that it calls itself “a working definition,” we have sought to improve on it by offering (a) a clearer core definition and (b) a coherent set of guidelines. We hope this will be helpful for monitoring and combating antisemitism, as well as for educational purposes. We propose our non-legally binding Declaration as an alternative to the IHRA Definition. Institutions that have already adopted the IHRA Definition can use our text as a tool for interpreting it.

The IHRA Definition includes 11 “examples” of antisemitism, 7 of which focus on the State of Israel. While this puts undue emphasis on one arena, there is a widely-felt need for clarity on the limits of legitimate political speech and action concerning Zionism, Israel, and Palestine. Our aim is twofold: (1) to strengthen the fight against antisemitism by clarifying what it is and how it is manifested, (2) to protect a space for an open debate about the vexed question of the future of Israel/Palestine. We do not all share the same political views and we are not seeking to promote a partisan political agenda. Determining that a controversial view or action is not antisemitic implies neither that we endorse it nor that we do not.

The guidelines that focus on Israel-Palestine (numbers 6 to 15) should be taken together. In general, when applying the guidelines each should be read in the light of the others and always with a view to context. Context can include the intention behind an utterance, or a pattern of speech over time, or even the identity of the speaker, especially when the subject is Israel or Zionism. So, for example, hostility to Israel could be an expression of an antisemitic animus, or it could be a reaction to a human rights violation, or it could be the emotion that a Palestinian person feels on account of their experience at the hands of the State. In short, judgement and sensitivity are needed in applying these guidelines to concrete situations.

### **Definition**

Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish).

### **Guidelines**

#### **A.**

##### **General**

1. It is racist to essentialize (treat a character trait as inherent) or to make sweeping negative generalizations about a given population. What is true of racism in general is true of antisemitism in particular.
2. What is particular in classic antisemitism is the idea that Jews are linked to the forces of evil. This stands at the core of many anti-Jewish fantasies, such as the idea of a Jewish conspiracy in which “the Jews” possess hidden power that they use to promote their own collective agenda at the expense of other people. This linkage between Jews and evil continues in the present: in the fantasy that “the Jews” control governments with a “hidden hand,” that they own the banks, control the media, act as “a state

within a state,” and are responsible for spreading disease (such as Covid-19). All these features can be instrumentalized by different (and even antagonistic) political causes.

3. Antisemitism can be manifested in words, visual images, and deeds. Examples of antisemitic words include utterances that all Jews are wealthy, inherently stingy, or unpatriotic. In antisemitic caricatures, Jews are often depicted as grotesque, with big noses and associated with wealth. Examples of antisemitic deeds are: assaulting someone because she or he is Jewish, attacking a synagogue, daubing swastikas on Jewish graves, or refusing to hire or promote people because they are Jewish.

4. Antisemitism can be direct or indirect, explicit or coded. For example, “The Rothschilds control the world” is a coded statement about the alleged power of “the Jews” over banks and international finance. Similarly, portraying Israel as the ultimate evil or grossly exaggerating its actual influence can be a coded way of racializing and stigmatizing Jews. In many cases, identifying coded speech is a matter of context and judgement, taking account of these guidelines.

5. Denying or minimizing the Holocaust by claiming that the deliberate Nazi genocide of the Jews did not take place, or that there were no extermination camps or gas chambers, or that the number of victims was a fraction of the actual total, is antisemitic.

## **B.**

### **Israel and Palestine: examples that, on the face of it, are antisemitic**

6. Applying the symbols, images, and negative stereotypes of classical antisemitism (see guidelines 2 and 3) to the State of Israel.

7. Holding Jews collectively responsible for Israel’s conduct or treating Jews, simply because they are Jewish, as agents of Israel.

8. Requiring people, because they are Jewish, publicly to condemn Israel or Zionism (for example, at a political meeting).

9. Assuming that non-Israeli Jews, simply because they are, Jews are necessarily more loyal to Israel than to their own countries.

10. Denying the right of Jews in the State of Israel to exist and flourish, collectively and individually, as Jews, in accordance with the principle of equality.

C.

**Israel and Palestine: examples that, on the face of it, are not antisemitic (whether or not one approves of the view or action)**

**11.** Supporting the Palestinian demand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil, and human rights, as encapsulated in international law.

**12.** Criticizing or opposing Zionism as a form of nationalism, or arguing for a variety of constitutional arrangements for Jews and Palestinians in the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. It is not antisemitic to support arrangements that accord full equality to all inhabitants “between the river and the sea,” whether in two states, a binational state, unitary democratic state, federal state, or in whatever form.

**13.** Evidence-based criticism of Israel as a state. This includes its institutions and founding principles. It also includes its policies and practices, domestic and abroad, such as the conduct of Israel in the West Bank and Gaza, the role Israel plays in the region, or any other way in which, as a state, it influences events in the world. It is not antisemitic to point out systematic racial discrimination. In general, the same norms of debate that apply to other states and to other conflicts over national self-determination apply in the case of Israel and Palestine. Thus, even if contentious, it is not antisemitic, in and of itself, to compare Israel with other historical cases, including settler-colonialism or apartheid.

**14.** Boycott, divestment, and sanctions are commonplace, nonviolent forms of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic.

**15.** Political speech does not have to be measured, proportional, tempered, or reasonable to be protected under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and other human rights instruments. Criticism that some may see as excessive or contentious, or as reflecting a “double standard,” is not, in and of itself, antisemitic. In general, the line between antisemitic and non-antisemitic speech is different from the line between unreasonable and reasonable speech.

### 3. The Nexus Document: Understanding Antisemitism at Its Nexus with Israel and Zionism

This definition of antisemitism, and the examples that follow, derive from a White Paper drafted by the Nexus Task Force, which examines the issues at the nexus of antisemitism and Israel in American politics. The Task Force is a project of the Knight Program on Media and Religion at the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism at USC. The definition is designed as a guide for policymakers and community leaders as they grapple with the complexities at the intersection of Israel and antisemitism.

*Antisemitism consists of anti-Jewish beliefs, attitudes, actions or systemic conditions. It includes negative beliefs and feelings about Jews, hostile behavior directed against Jews (because they are Jews), and conditions that discriminate against Jews and significantly impede their ability to participate as equals in political, religious, cultural, economic, or social life.*

*As an embodiment of collective Jewish organization and action, Israel can be a target of antisemitism and antisemitic behavior. Thus, it is important for Jews and their allies to understand what is and what is not antisemitic in relation to Israel.*

#### WHAT IS ANTISEMITIC?

1. All claims of antisemitism made by Jews, like all claims of discrimination and oppression in general, should be given serious attention.
2. Whether speech or conduct about Zionism and Israel is antisemitic should be based on the standards for speech or conduct that apply to antisemitic behavior in general.
3. It is antisemitic to promote myths, stereotypes or attitudes about Zionism and/or Israel that derive from and/or reinforce antisemitic accusations and tropes. These include:
  - a. Characterizing Israel as being part of a sinister world conspiracy of Jewish control of the media, economy, government or other financial, cultural or societal institutions.
  - b. Indiscriminately blaming suffering and injustices around the world on a hidden Jewish conspiracy or of being the maligning hand of Israel or Zionism.
  - c. Holding individuals or institutions, because they are Jewish, *a priori* culpable of real or imagined wrongdoing committed by Israel.

- d. Considering Jews to be *a priori* incapable of setting aside their loyalty to the Jewish people and/or Israel.
  - e. Denigrating or denying the Jewish identity of certain Jews because they are perceived as holding the “wrong” position (whether too critical or too favorable) on Israel.
4. It is antisemitic to use symbols and images that present all Jews as collectively guilty for the actions of the State of Israel.
  5. It is antisemitic to attack and/or physically harm a Jew because of her/his relationship to Israel.
  6. It is antisemitic to convey intense hostility toward Jews who are connected to Israel in a way that intentionally or irresponsibly (acting with disregard to potential violent consequences) provokes antisemitic violence.
  7. It is antisemitic to treat Israel in a negative manner based of a claim that Jews alone should be denied the right to define themselves as a people and to exercise any form of self-determination.
  8. It is antisemitic to advocate a political solution that denies Jews the right to define themselves as a people, thereby denying them – because they are Jews – the right to self-determination.
  9. It is antisemitic to treat Israel differently solely because it is a Jewish state, using standards different than those applied to other countries.

#### WHAT IS NOT ANTISEMITIC?

1. As a general rule, criticism of Zionism and Israel, opposition to Israel’s policies, or nonviolent political action directed at the State of Israel and/or its policies should not, as such, be deemed antisemitic.
2. Even contentious, strident, or harsh criticism of Israel for its policies and actions, including those that led to the creation of Israel, is not *per se* illegitimate or antisemitic.
3. Opposition to Zionism and/or Israel does not necessarily reflect specific anti-Jewish animus nor purposefully lead to antisemitic behaviors and conditions. (For example, someone might oppose the principle of nationalism or ethnonationalist ideology. Similarly, someone’s personal or national experience may have been adversely affected by the creation of the State of Israel. These motivations or attitudes towards Israel and/or Zionism do not necessarily constitute antisemitic behavior.)

4. Paying disproportionate attention to Israel and treating Israel differently than other countries is not *prima facie* proof of antisemitism. (There are numerous reasons for devoting special attention to Israel and treating Israel differently, e.g., some people care about Israel more; others may pay more attention because Israel has a special relationship with the United States and receives \$4 billion in American aid).