



antisemitism is...



BOOKLET
SERIES

TOOLS FOR ACTIVISM

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING & ADOPTING THE IHRA WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

The first step to fighting
antisemitism is to define it.

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THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR

— FOCUS —

**An old beast re-awoken,
anti-Semitism stalks
Europe, US once more**

The New York Times

**'There Is Still So Much Evil': Growing
Anti-Semitism Stuns American Jews**

TIME

**Surge in Anti-Semitic Attacks Has Caused a 'Sense of
Emergency' Among Jews Worldwide, New Report Says**

THE
NEW YORKER

**HOW ANTI-SEMITISM RISES ON
THE LEFT AND RIGHT**

What is the problem?

Antisemitism: The oldest hatred is a growing threat

In the decades after the Holocaust and expulsion of Jews from Arab states, many assumed that hatred against Jews was on the decline. Yet this dangerous virus has emerged again around the globe.

Cases of assault, harassment, and vandalism against Jews are at near-historic levels in the U.S., Canada, the UK, and worldwide. Although less than two percent of the U.S. population is Jewish, the FBI reported that nearly 70 percent of religion-based hate crimes were directed against Jews in 2023.

In person and online, from coast to coast and across the world, there are unprovoked attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions.

n p r

NATIONAL

**Synagogue Shooting Follows Historic Rise In
Anti-Semitic Incidents And Online Attacks**

Synagogues and Jewish centers are vandalized, and there are attempts to breach synagogues while worshipers are inside, with the intent to harm. The majority of U.S. Jews report experiencing antisemitism.

Deadly attacks in Pittsburgh; Poway; Washington, DC; and Boulder have made American Jews feel more vulnerable than anyone could have imagined. Jewish students—especially those who wear Jewish symbols, support Israel's existence, and refuse to reject their religious, ethnic, and/or national identity—often find themselves subject to discrimination, bullying, and racism.

Antisemitism Snapshot

ITALY: Zoom bombers shouted “Jews to the ovens” at the online launch of a book about the Holocaust.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY: Protesters claiming to be “anti-war” chanted for Hamas terrorists, calling on them to “burn Tel Aviv to the ground.”

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT: Swastikas were painted on the chemistry building on the first day of Passover and again a couple of days later on another building nearby.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY: AEPi, a predominantly Jewish fraternity, was egged on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

WASHINGTON, DC: In May 2025, Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky, a young couple who worked for the Israeli Embassy, were murdered outside a Jewish event focused on humanitarian aid in Gaza and other parts of the Middle East.

LOS ANGELES: In November 2023, Paul Kessler died after being assaulted and knocked to the ground by an anti-Israel protester in Thousand Oaks.

BAHÍA BLANCA, ARGENTINA: A building belonging to the Jewish community was vandalized with graffiti saying “We are going to kill you” and “Jewish rats” alongside a Jewish Star of David.



NEWS | STUDENT LIFE

Rabbi advises Jewish students to 'return home as soon as possible' following reports of 'extreme antisemitism' on and around campus

Students have reported a rise in antisemitic incidents in the days following the Thursday sweep of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment.'

4 WASHINGTON

Video: Suspect shouts 'free Palestine' after allegedly killing 2 at DC Jewish museum

NEW YORK CITY: Joseph Borgen, 29, was beaten by a group of people shouting antisemitic statements in the middle of a New York street.

Newsweek

NEWS

Joseph Borgen, Jewish Man Beaten in NYC Attack, Says Face 'Felt Like It Was on Fire' as Suspect Arrested

BERLIN, GERMANY:

A visibly Jewish man was approached by three men and punched in the face.

LONDON: In central London, an anti-Israel protester walked through the streets with a group, shouting, “We’ll find some Jews there!” and “We want the Zionists! We want their blood!” Video footage showed a police officer taking no action in response.

TORONTO, CANADA: In 2024, a Jewish girls school was shot at three separate times in the span of seven months.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA: A non-Jewish woman was harassed and assaulted on the train for reading a book about Jewish history. Police were investigated for responding to the incident with disinterest and even suggesting she shouldn’t have been reading the book.

Forward

JEWISH. INDEPENDENT. NONPROFIT.

FAST FORWARD

Montreal synagogue firebombed for the 2nd time in just over a year

No one was injured in the incident, the most recent attack on a Canadian Jewish institution since Oct. 7, 2023

MONTREAL, CANADA: Congregation Beth Tikvah was firebombed twice in 2023 and 2024.

BOULDER, COLORADO: Jews and non-Jewish allies were brutally attacked by an Islamist extremist during a peaceful walk in support of Israeli hostages of Hamas. The attacker tried to burn them to death using Molotov cocktails and a makeshift flamethrower. An 82-year-old Jewish woman later died from her injuries.

SYRACUSE, NY: A group of Syracuse University students was verbally harassed with antisemitic slurs and egged by someone in a vehicle.

Antisemitism Snapshot

These incidents are a very small sample of the bigotry Jews experience today.

Skyrocketing antisemitism on social media

The recent spate of antisemitic attacks is being fueled in part by social media, where conspiracy theories spread quickly and easily without being fact-checked. The failure of social media platforms to address this crisis only serves to fan the flames.



ANTISEMITISM IS A PROBLEM, AND IT WON'T SOLVE ITSELF!

Why is a widely accepted modern definition of antisemitism needed?

1 Antisemitism evolves over time.

Antisemitism “mutates” and can occur in new ways that are hard for leaders and institutions to identify. Jewish identity is a mix of ethnicity, religion, culture, ancestry, and more, so Jews can be targeted in many different ways. Anti-Jewish bigotry was once focused on the religion of Jews, vilifying them for not accepting Christianity or for other aspects of their religious beliefs and traditions that made them different. Then it focused on the notion of race, demonizing Jews for being inferior to “pure white” Aryans. It has focused on economic issues, accusing Jews of being either capitalists or communists.

It can connect to nationalism, first faulting Jews for being stateless and later discriminating against Jews for having their own state. It comes from the far left, the far right, Islamist extremist groups, and others. Often, these groups will take the same antisemitic slur or conspiracy theory and change it slightly to fit their audience’s political and cultural biases. We can’t



fight the antisemitic virus of today if we only recognize the version from 1942. Because antisemitism comes in many forms, people may have no idea when they are witnessing—or even engaging in—antisemitism.

2 Perpetrators attempt to mask their antisemitism.

Without a consistent definition, those who promote antisemitism will attempt to define the term to exclude their own bigotry. As famed historian Raul Hilberg noted, “The Nazis did not call themselves anti-Semites.” Those who engage in modern forms of antisemitism are often no different. They target Jews for supporting Israel’s existence yet claim that their intent was “anti-Israel” or “anti-Zionist,” not anti-Jewish. At multiple universities, organizations that oppose Israel’s existence—a stance the vast majority of Jews see as antisemitic—have pushed their own “definitions of antisemitism.” Naturally, these self-serving definitions are crafted to exclude the forms of hatred these groups promote.

This tactic is dangerous because it can be used to enable violent extremism. The man who murdered Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky in Washington, DC, posted an anti-Zionist manifesto before his horrific attack. Since then, some “activists” have argued that this was not an antisemitic act and tried to shift the blame to the Israeli government.



ADL

83% of Jewish College Students Have Experienced or Witnessed Antisemitism Firsthand Since Oct. 7 Attack, Survey Finds



Zionism represents the Jewish people's age-old desire to be free in Israel—their ancestral home. On a political level, it is a liberation movement supporting the basic rights of Jews to self-determination in that land. The incidents above highlight the importance of having a definition that recognizes Zionism as a central part of identity for many Jews and not merely a political point of view.

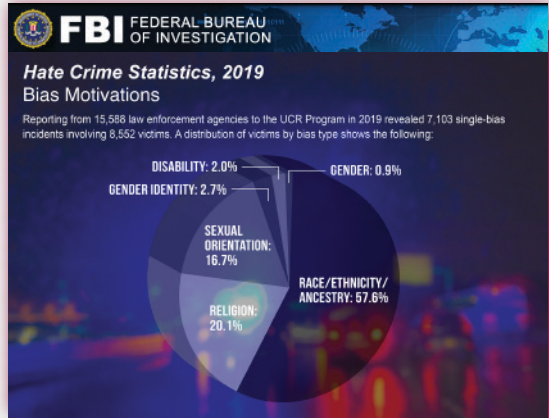
3 Like all groups, Jews define their own experiences of oppression.

Our society generally accepts that each community gets to define its own oppression. One gender doesn't get to tell the other what is sexist toward the latter. One group doesn't have the authority to determine what behaviors are racist toward another group. Jews have the right to define how they experience antisemitism, especially in environments where antisemitic incidents are commonly dismissed. Yet, in an American Jewish Committee survey of young adults, two-thirds said it would make no difference to them if a "Jewish person or organization considered a statement or idea to be antisemitic." Antisemitism cannot be taken seriously if the experiences of its primary targets—Jews—are dismissed. If this hatred is not taken seriously, it will grow unchecked.

4 Confusion about antisemitism leads to:

A. UNDERREPORTING

To record and track antisemitism, we need to know what it is. Collecting data about antisemitism is an important tool in fighting this hatred. According to an American Jewish Committee Report, *more than half* of Americans, 18 to 29 years old, said they didn't know the meaning of the word antisemitism. Thirty percent said they had heard the term but were not sure what it meant. Almost a quarter said they had never even heard the word at all.



B. LACK OF JUSTICE

Antisemitic acts are often not identified because of a lack of clarity about what antisemitism is.

Ilan Halimi, a 23-year-old French Jew, was tied up, stripped naked, gagged, beaten, humiliated, mutilated, and set on fire while still alive. Subscribing to an antisemitic stereotype that all Jews are rich, the perpetrators abducted and held him for ransom. There was no charge of antisemitism as an aggravating factor in this murder case until the trial was in progress and the perpetrator demonstrated his contempt for “Zionist terrorists” and “bearded men wearing kippahs.” Only then did magistrates add antisemitism as an aggravating factor.

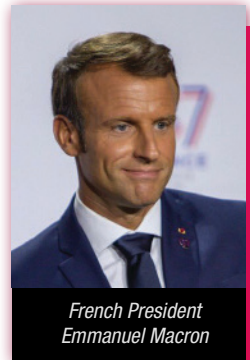


C. MORE CRIME

Antisemitism, undiagnosed and unrecognized, has led to increased violence against Jews. On February 19, 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron warned his nation,

“For the first time in many years, antisemitism is killing people again in France,” and acknowledged that French authorities “did not know how to react effectively.”

Other countries are also finding themselves in the same dangerous situation.



French President
Emmanuel Macron

5 Lack of understanding leads to unintentional antisemitic activity.

When individuals fail to understand antisemitism, they may engage in antisemitic rhetoric or conduct without meaning to. There are many examples of people promoting antisemitism who, once publicly exposed, respond that they did not fully understand the meaning of what they were saying. Education, including through a consistent definition, allows people to avoid promoting bigotry against Jews unintentionally.

A screenshot of a news broadcast. On the left is a portrait of a young man with short brown hair and a beard, wearing a white shirt. To his right, the word "STATEMENT" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below it, a quote is displayed in white capital letters: "I AM DEEPLY SORRY FOR USING AN ANTI-SEMITIC SLUR... WHILE I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE WORD MEANT AT THE TIME, MY IGNORANCE ABOUT ITS HISTORY AND HOW OFFENSIVE IT IS TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS ABSOLUTELY NOT AN EXCUSE AND I WAS JUST WRONG... I AM COMMITTED TO PROPERLY SEEKING OUT PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP EDUCATE ME ABOUT THIS TYPE OF HATE." At the bottom of the screen, there is a news ticker with the text "INE DOSE, LIKE SPECIAL SHIPPING EQUIPMENT AND THE MEDICAL SCRUBS AND ID BADGE". To the right of the ticker, the time "5:46" and temperature "70°" are shown, along with the NBC 6 logo and the Olympic rings.



THE IHRA 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.

The definition includes examples that describe 11 ways Jews may experience antisemitism today, taking into account the overall context:

- 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.

These examples focus on many different forms of antisemitism from across the political spectrum. Some are rooted in hateful ideas that have been around for centuries, while others are newer.

Regarding Israel, IHRA states that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” However, it also recognizes that rhetoric and actions related to the world’s only Jewish state can and do sometimes cross the line into bigotry against Jews.

Why Use the IHRA Definition? This definition was developed by experts who express the needs of the victims rather than the biases of the perpetrators. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is an international network of leading academics, museum heads, and nonprofit leaders from 35 countries that promotes Holocaust research and education. In 2016, facing rising antisemitism around the world, IHRA drafted a definition of antisemitism aimed at helping countries, institutions, and organizations recognize, monitor, and record antisemitism.

The IHRA Definition is the consensus-driven choice of the world’s democracies and has been adopted or endorsed by a wide range of governments, institutions, and organizations. It has been:

- Posted on the U.S. State Department website since 2010.
- Used by the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and State.
- Adopted by governments of over 30 countries.
- Signed onto by the 35 governments that are members of IHRA.
- Used by the Justice Ministries of Austria and Germany.
- Adopted by the European Union.
- Adopted by the Global Imams Council.
- Supported by both Republican and Democratic presidential administrations in the U.S.

Visit www.standwithus.com/ihra for updates on the adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.

MISCONCEPTIONS AND MISINFORMATION

There has been controversy, and sometimes misinformation, about the IHRA Working Definition. Here are some of the claims made by critics, along with facts and context responding to those claims.

CLAIM 1

*The IHRA Definition is **redundant**; we already have non-discrimination laws.*

RESPONSE

The IHRA Definition is not a law. It is simply a guiding tool for how to apply existing rules and laws where antisemitism may be involved. The IHRA Definition is the international consensus definition of antisemitism; there is nothing else that provides this type of consistency and clarity. Moreover, if current laws were sufficient without a definition of antisemitism, we would not see ongoing confusion about how to identify, report, and address antisemitism.

CLAIM 2

*The IHRA Definition **infringes** upon First Amendment (free speech) rights.*

RESPONSE

The IHRA Definition does not require or prohibit any speech at all. It is not a law that can be enforced. Like any definition in a dictionary, it is a tool for identifying antisemitism, not silencing or punishing any type of speech. Leaders and institutions have their own free speech rights and responsibilities to condemn incidents of hatred and bigotry, and even use them as teachable moments. Referencing IHRA to confront cases of antisemitism in this way does not violate anyone's free speech rights because no one has a right to be free from criticism for promoting hate. Nor does the IHRA Definition have a "chilling effect" on criticism of Israel, as evidenced by the massive amount of criticism we see in many contexts around the world.

CLAIM 3

*The IHRA Definition **punishes/silences** criticism of Israel by labeling it as antisemitism.*

RESPONSE

This is blatantly false. In fact, the IHRA Definition specifically states that criticism of Israel, similar to criticism leveled at other countries, cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Israel-related examples within the IHRA Definition include discrimination, demonization, and/or denying Israel's right to exist, not mere criticism. As noted previously, nothing in the IHRA Definition punishes or silences any speech, including speech about Israel, whether antisemitic or not. The individuals and groups that make this claim are often those that go far beyond criticizing the Israeli government. Their goal is to avoid being criticized when they call for the elimination of Israel or celebrate atrocities like those committed by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

CLAIM 4

*The IHRA Definition **singles out** Jews for special (i.e., privileged) treatment.*

RESPONSE

The IHRA Definition exists to ensure equal protections for Jews, not special treatment. It helps people understand a form of bigotry that can be difficult to identify because of the way it changes and appears in many different ways.

CLAIM 5

*Adoption of the IHRA Definition **harms** Palestinians.*

RESPONSE

Identifying bigotry or discrimination against one group does not harm any other group. Some Palestinians may oppose Israel's existence because of suffering they have experienced, rather than intense hatred against Jews. However, their intent does not change the fact that eliminating Israel would have a deeply harmful impact on the Jewish people.

Palestinian activists and their supporters remain free to engage in bigoted speech, if they choose to do so.

The IHRA Definition may identify some of that speech as antisemitic, but it does nothing to silence or punish that speech. Moreover, the desire of some to engage in bigoted speech is not a reason to shy away from identifying and condemning that speech for what it is (i.e., racism, sexism, antisemitism, etc.).

CLAIM 6

*The IHRA Definition and/or its supporters are too **rigid** or “dogmatic.”*

RESPONSE

Words matter. The text of the definition must be the starting point for discussions about fighting antisemitism at an institutional level. The definition is explicitly worded in non-dogmatic terms, with words such as “may,” “might,” and “could.” None of the examples of antisemitism provided within the definition are automatically judged to be antisemitism without examining the context. The definition makes clear that context is key: “Contemporary examples of antisemitism...could, taking into account the overall context, include... ”

CLAIM 7

Adopting the IHRA Definition is divisive.

RESPONSE

The vast majority of democratic governments and Jewish groups that focus on fighting antisemitism use the IHRA Definition. Fifty-one out of 53 major American Jewish organizations within the Conference of Presidents have formally adopted or endorsed this definition. Studies by Brandeis University and AJC have found that the vast majority of Jews see denying Israel’s right to exist as a form of antisemitism. This matches a key example from IHRA that is often attacked by anti-Israel groups. While there may be loud opposition in some cases, that does not justify refusing to adopt a definition that reflects the real-life experiences of most Jews around the world.

ADOPTING AND USING IHRA CAN:

**Raise Awareness
ABOUT ANTISEMITISM**

**Help Identify Cases
INVOLVING ANTISEMITISM**

**Increase Reporting
OF ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS**

**Assess Intent
OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

**Assist In Data Recording
ABOUT ANTISEMITISM**

Take the First Step in Combating Antisemitism!

Have **YOUR** institution, agency, organization, department, church, synagogue, temple, tribe, mosque, club, city, village, library, school, sports team, and/or business adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.

TO START, GO TO

www.standwithus.com/ihra

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Through a generous partnership with Evelyn and Dr. Shmuel Katz, StandWithUs has been able to produce cutting-edge print materials for over two decades. Students, community members, and activists worldwide have used our popular booklets and brochures to educate the public about Israel and antisemitism.



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