

Presentation on Dangers of International Holocaust Remembrance Association - Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA-WDA)



**Antisemitism is Real.
It Must Be Opposed.
But the
IHRA Definition of Antisemitism
is Not the Way To Do It.
It is an Attempt To
Stop Criticism of Israel.**

Independent Jewish Voices Canada



- ▶ Grassroots organization grounded in Jewish tradition that opposes all forms of racism and advocates for justice and peace for all in Israel-Palestine.
- ▶ Active chapters in cities and on university campuses across the country.
- ▶ Thematic areas:
 - ▶ Palestine Solidarity:
 - ▶ First national Jewish organization to endorse the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.
 - ▶ Anti-racism and Indigenous solidarity:
 - ▶ Solidarity with Indigenous peoples and with all marginalized peoples in Canada against racism, settler colonialism and white supremacy. Combats antisemitism and distinguishes it clearly from critiques of Israeli policies.
 - ▶ Justice-Oriented Jewish Communities:
 - ▶ No one should have to choose between embracing Judaism or Jewishness and supporting Palestinian rights

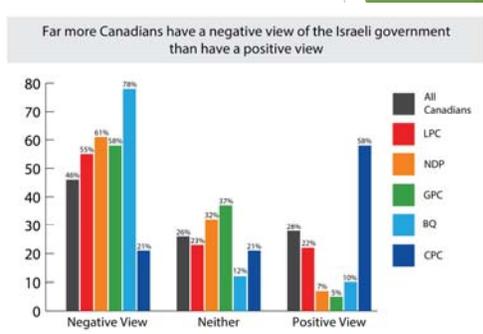
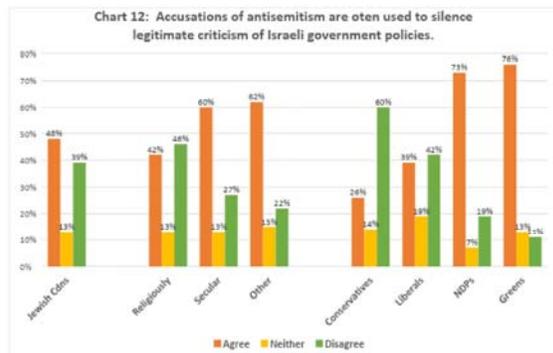


3

Polling on Canadian attitudes to Israel, Palestine

All Canadians EKOS poll, Jan-Feb 2017

<https://ijvcanada.org/2017/poll-results-canadians-critical-of-israel/>



Jewish Canadians EKOS poll, Sept 2018

<https://ijvcanada.org/2019/new-ekos-poll-jewish-canadians-sharply-divided-on-israel-palestine/>



Antisemitism is a Type of Racism

- ▶ Recent rise of antisemitic incidents cannot be separated from rise of racism and xenophobia in general throughout the West & in other parts of the world.
- ▶ Antisemitism a type of racism and xenophobia.
- ▶ Must be opposed on general anti-racist principles, in solidarity with other antiracist struggles and in concert with the principles of human rights and equality for all people.



5

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA-WDA)



- ▶ A tool in the “Weaponization” of Antisemitism
- ▶ “The New Antisemitism” : Anti-Zionism = Antisemitism
- ▶ Being promoted as “The Gold Standard” in fighting antisemitism
- ▶ Has been “adopted” - in one form or another - in approximately 25 countries.
 - ▶ Including an “endorsement” by Global Affairs Canada
- ▶ Promoted by the Committee on Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) to be formally adopted by various levels of government and administration in Canada
 - ▶ Federal, Provincial, Municipal, Police, University Administrations, ...



6

IHRA-WDA is Deeply Flawed as a Legal or Administrative Tool

- ▶ Originally developed as proposed research guideline for the EUMC in 2004. Never formally adopted by the EUMC.
- ▶ Adopted hurriedly by the IHRA in 2016 with no debate.
- ▶ Opposed for legal/administrative use by the person who wrote it - Kenneth Stern



7

IHRA-WDA Disavowed by its Author

“Armed with a [legal] determination that effectively says campus anti-Zionism is antisemitism, these professors will correctly see themselves at risk when they ask their students to read and digest materials deemed anti-Zionist, whether the writings of leading 20th century Jewish thinkers who were skeptical of Zionism, such as Hannah Arendt and Martin Buber, or of contemporary Palestinians. Professors do not get combat pay. It will be safer and wiser for them to teach about Jews in the shtetl than Jews in modern Israel, and Zionism as a concept from the late 19th century, rather than how it plays out today. ...

My fear is, if we similarly enshrine this definition into law, outside groups will try and suppress - rather than answer - political speech they don't like. The academy, Jewish students, and faculty teaching about Jewish issues, will all suffer.

Testimony of KENNETH S. STERN - original author of IHRA-WDA, before UNITES STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY November 7, 2017



8

IHRA-WDA: The Definition

- ▶ “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.”



9

IHRA-WDA: The Examples

- ▶ ...
- ▶ 6. 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.
- ▶ 7. 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.
- ▶ 8. **Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.**
- ▶ 9. Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- ▶ 10. Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- ▶



10

The IHRA-WDA Not Fit For Purpose



- ▶ Not fit as tool to adjudicate whether incident is or is not antisemitic
- ▶ Actual “definition” vague and effectively meaningless
- ▶ Examples almost all context sensitive
 - ▶ Might indicate antisemitism, but just as well might not indicate antisemitism
- ▶ 7 of the 11 examples designed to label criticism of Israel and/or Zionism as antisemitic.
- ▶ Perniciousness of IHRA-WDA highlighted by the results of a recent EKOS survey of Canadian Jews:
 - ▶ approximately 60% of Canadian Jews themselves do not see criticism of Israel as in and of itself antisemitic,
 - ▶ half of Canadian Jews believe that accusations of antisemitism are “often used to silence legitimate criticism of Israeli policies.”

Summary ...

- ▶ IHRA-WDA is a poor tool for determining if an incident is or is not antisemitic
- ▶ Adopted enthusiastically by CIJA and other pro-Israel organizations as tool to suppress criticism of Israel
- ▶ Does little to identify or stop real antisemitism as we see it being played out in Canada and the U.S.
- ▶ Its effect - if formally adopted by governments, police, universities etc. will be to ban and even criminalize many forms of Palestinian solidarity.
- ▶ Threat to free speech and right to protest
- ▶ Adoption by governments, police, and universities must be vigorously opposed

Better definition

Antisemitism is hostility, prejudice, defamation, discrimination or violence against Jews, as individuals or as a collective, because they are Jews. It includes essentializing Jews by attributing to them characteristics or behaviors that are deemed dangerous, harmful, frightening or threatening to non-Jews.

It is important to understand that antisemitism is a type of racism, bigotry and xenophobia and as such is closely related to - and often motivated by the same impulses - as anti-black racism, anti-brown racism, and Islamophobia. In the 20th and 21st century, antisemitism has most often been associated with white supremacy and theories of Aryan or White European racial superiority. Antisemites sometimes see Jews as undermining the "white" or the "white Christian" race, either on their own or by "masterminding" an "invasion" of black and/or brown people. Antisemites often characterize Jews as a monolithic cabal, secretly controlling the world through their control of money and or the media. Of course these are not the only expressions of antisemitism, but are merely some common ways antisemitic stereotypes have manifested themselves in the past century.

It is essential, when devising a strategy to fight antisemitism, to recognize that it is not a unique or special form of bigotry. People who hate, discriminate and/or attack Jews, almost always also shun other minority or marginalized groups too - blacks, Muslims, gays, women, etc.

It is important to understand that to privilege discrimination against any particular one of these groups risks further marginalizing the others. Moreover, it also risks driving a wedge between marginalized groups thus making it harder for them to cooperate in fighting their common enemies.

Fighting and educating against antisemitism must be part of a larger struggle against all group hatred and discrimination. It must be based on a vision of treating all people equally and with respect and recognizing that ethnic, religious, gender and other groups are never homogeneous, and that all individuals should be treated "by the content of their character" and not their ethnic, religious or other group identities.

Finally, it should be noted - because some people have obfuscated this point - that the State of Israel is a political entity, like any other state. Its policies and actions can be judged and criticized, even harshly, just like those of any other state. Such criticism is not antisemitic.

► For more information: www.noihra.ca

13

