The IHRA is the most coherent and flexible guideline available for combating antisemitism

As Jewish Studies scholars and educators worldwide, consistent with the Jewish Studies Zionist Network’s mission statement, we, the undersigned, support the working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA WDA) and its adoption by the United Nations. We further reject the attempt by some scholars to substitute the IHRA WDA with the more recent Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA), ostensibly drafted to enable critique of the State of Israel.

The IHRA WDA is a non-binding, working definition intended for guidance. It does not have the force of law, neither is it rigid in its analysis of anti-Zionism and antisemitism. The definition is fully consistent with legitimate criticism of Israel and does not silence the voice of Palestinians.

Moreover, it has been adopted by 37 member states and 865 organizations, with more governments and institutions considering its approval. Conversely, few have accepted the JDA, which has been publicly rebuffed by the Biden administration in favour of the IHRA’s more reliable model.

For over 50 years, the United Nations has consistently taken an anti-Zionist stance, including a 1975 resolution that defined Zionism as “racism” (revoked in 1991) with complete disregard that Zionism represents the movement for Jewish national self-determination, which the UN had endorsed in 1947.

The UN has applied double standards to Israel. It has passed (or attempted to pass) hundreds of resolutions targeting Israel, far exceeding the number criticizing any other country in the world, including China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

The adoption of the IHRA WDA will help ensure that Israel is treated in the same fashion as other UN member states.

The JDA states “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.” This principle is ambiguous, nebulous, and implies that the bar for labelling something antisemitic is far higher than for any other form of racism. Whatever the authors’ intent, it leaves the door open for “unreasonable” and intimidating situations for Jews, whose sense of vulnerability has increased dramatically in recent years.

Moreover, despite contentions that the IHRA WDA is a politicised definition of antisemitism, the JDA is no less so. It contains numerous points that allow the targeting of Jews for their identity, especially on college campuses, which has increased at an alarming rate in recent years. More broadly, it will also have a chilling effect on Zionists who fear that such a definition will not protect them from harassment for their views.
There is no other diaspora community that has been targeted in such a manner. The IHRA definition will safeguard that Jews get treated in a manner consistent with every other minority group.

To date, there have been no instances of the IHRA definition having been used to target, silence, or persecute anyone exercising their freedom of speech.

Unfortunately, the UN’s human rights instruments have been insufficient in combating antisemitism. We therefore urge the UN to follow in the footsteps of so many of its member states and global institutions in adopting the IHRA definition.

**Jewish Studies Zionist Network Coordinating Committee**

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