

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism: Criticism, Implementation, and Importance

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Introduction

This essay analyzes the status of the working definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) (See appendix for the text of the working definition). Five years since its adoption in May 2016, the IHRA working definition is the main document that elucidates what antisemitism is, by providing a general definition and 11 explanatory examples. This definition is widely accepted and has been adopted by hundreds of diverse bodies, including governmental institutions, societal organizations, and corporations. The growing understanding of the IHRA document and its significance has led to its being used to recognize and prevent antisemitic incidents and manifestations worldwide.

Antisemitism is a multifaceted phenomenon, and some of its aspects have been subjected to a harsh and continuous debate. Israel-related antisemitism is one such example, whereby political beliefs and factional ideologies have considerably affected the study and understanding of the phenomenon. Accordingly, the IHRA document is also criticized inasmuch as it encompasses these examples.

This essay offers an analysis of the current status of the IHRA document, while examining the main points of criticism and the responses to it. It is based on a larger and more comprehensive research, conducted by Dr. Giovanni Quer, Adv.

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Background

On May 26, 2016, the IHRA adopted the working definition of antisemitism, following a number of events and occurrences: The working definition was first formulated during 2004–2005 following the escalation of violent and virulent antisemitism and anti-Zionism, culminating in the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa in August 2001. The working definition of antisemitism helped address “the new antisemitism.” A new phase in the long history of antisemitism, it was characterized by increased violence, more radical Muslim activity, and intensified anti-Israel expressions. The urgent need for a definition of antisemitism in the struggle against it was obvious, as well as in cases when antisemitic terms and symbols have been used to express anti-Zionism.

A host of organizations, institutes, and individual scholars, joining efforts coordinated by the American Jewish Committee, drafted the definition. It is a short document and avoids never-ending issues, such as who is an antisemite, why, and since when, or who is a Jew and what Judaism is. Instead, it focuses on a concise definition of antisemitism and provides concrete examples, which enable antisemitic cases to be identified and monitored.

The working definition of antisemitism is a non-legally binding paper; it is a recommendation with which to work, and as such it was first adopted by the EUMC (the European Union Monitoring Center, situated in Vienna, today the FRA, Fundamental Rights Agency), in late 2004 and then by the OSCE (the organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), in 2005. Over the years, it was used for identifying antisemitic events, for guiding police officers in dealing with complaints, for informing seminars of law enforcement entities, and so forth. But its use was limited, and a proactive international entity was needed to re-adopt the same text. Indeed, on May 2016 the working definition was adopted unanimously by the 31 member states (then) of IHRA during a meeting in Bucharest Romania.

The document is called the “IHRA working definition” despite its previous history because since its adoption by the IHRA, the working definition has become internationally known, used, and implemented; it has been adopted by more than 600 governments, parliaments, local councils, universities, and sport clubs worldwide, all the more so during 2020–2021. Yet the more widespread it has

¹ See the Kantor Center for more information about this project: <http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/>.

become, the more it has been subjected to objections, especially from academic circles, claiming that it stifles freedom of speech and criticism of Israel's policies while ignoring the main thrust of the definition, which is to help in protecting Jews and Jewish entities.

The IHRA Working Definition: Criticism and Response

Three main categories of criticism can be identified, revolving around the scope, effectiveness, and the ramifications of the definition's use. Although some find fault with the text, claiming that it is not precisely worded enough, others dismiss the whole enterprise as impractical since it is a non-legally binding text. The examples related to anti-Israel antisemitism specified therein clearly are the main point of contention. Most critics of the IHRA working definition contend that it encroaches on the right to freedom of speech as the IHRA working definition serves to silence voices critical of Israel and its policies by accusing those critical of Israel as being antisemitic. At the same time, supporters of the IHRA working definition are trying to draw attention to the antisemitic components of the discourse and supporters of the Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The Definition as Vague and Imprecise

The argument that the IHRA working definition is vague is made in a publication commissioned by the German Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation and the NGO Medico International, authored by Peter Ullrich (2019). According to Ulrich, the "immense vagueness" of the working definition construes antisemitism mainly as a "sensory experience," while it disregards other essential manifestations (Ullrich, 2019).

The IHRA definition of antisemitism attempts to identify the core elements of diverse manifestations of Jew-hatred via one acceptable, general definition. The object at the center of this process is a form of hatred, phobia, and hostility that throughout the centuries has tormented the Jewish people in various ways and has resulted in diverse types of seclusion, discrimination, and persecution. It is, therefore, possible that the IHRA definition is reductive, precisely because that is its purpose: to reduce to its core a centuries-long phenomenon that has constantly mutated and adapted to different cultures, ideologies, and political contexts. Given this, the IHRA definition seeks to concentrate on the essential aspects of this varied phenomenon, providing practical examples for clarification.

Concerning its content, some of the critics state that the IHRA working definition of antisemitism omits certain forms of anti-Jewish hatred, but this argument seems to confuse the core of antisemitism with its diverse forms and the various

ways it is manifested. The short and practical working definition aims to explain and characterize antisemitism but it does not seek to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive list of all forms and manifestations of antisemitism, whether individual or institutional. Forms of antisemitism may differ immensely in their outcomes, but nevertheless arise from a shared general negative perception or conceptualization of the “Jew.” This same negative perception is manifested through different practices and platforms and is accompanied by varying levels of animosity. Therefore, claims that the definition is vague, or imprecise because it does not mention institutional antisemitism, for example, as expressed by political parties, should be readily dismissed. The definition does not mention antisemitic hate speech that appears on the internet either, yet the definition can be easily applied to it.

The study of antisemitism addresses what antisemitism is, how it expresses itself, its perniciousness, and the stage upon which it unfolds. The IHRA definition certainly covers the first two aspects, providing a general definition of what antisemitism is, and a number of examples of how it expresses itself. Claiming that the working definition is imprecise because it does not include the entire spectrum of manifestations misses its main point.

The working definition includes five examples of Israel’s demonization and delegitimization that are inherently related to other forms of antisemitism and are similar to classic antisemitic tropes. It can be argued that the real issue at hand is not the degree of precision or lack thereof, but rather the specific content that equates criticism of Israel and Zionism as being antisemitic.

Critics have also leveled the claim that the working definition lacks scholarly consensus. Given the growing relevance of the IHRA working definition as having been endorsed and adopted by international organizations, states, institutions, and non-governmental organizations, some patterns emerge.

First, scholarly consensus on a given subject is not necessary to establish its validity, while examples of scholarly consensus on any subject are very few. The working definition was drafted by scholars in cooperation with practitioners and it has never been claimed to be an academic document; rather it is seen as a practical document, and a *working* definition. Its validity has been established by its being adopted by various groups.

Second, criticism of the working definition can be used to improve it. Indeed, any alleged weaknesses identified in the working definition can help to further clarify how the definition is interpreted. At the same time, however, if the bone of contention around the working definition focuses largely on the specific element

of Israel-related antisemitism, then the debate becomes political and little room is left for consensus.

Finally, this polemical argument has a degree of condescension. Critics of the definition deem the document invalid because of their criticism, inspired by political considerations and mainly focused on one single aspect of it (namely, the Israel-related antisemitism). Moreover, the fact that a group of scholars, commentators, and activists do not agree with the content of the working definition and even deem it detrimental does not invalidate it.

The Legal Standing of the Definition

Two main arguments have been levelled against the legal standing of the IHRA working definition. First, that the document does not have any legal status is seen as being its main weakness; lacking the capability of direct enforcement, the working definition is seen as being not productive. The second argument is that the quasi-legal standing of the definition infringes on the right of freedom of speech: even though the working definition is not legally binding, it nevertheless is employed with legal implications. These two opposite claims comprise both legal and political considerations, regarding the nature of the document and its efficacy.

Not Legally Binding, yet Efficient

The working definition does not render speech illegal; it only clarifies what speech should be considered antisemitic or hateful and thus socially unacceptable. The criticism of the definition as being ineffective based on its non-legally binding status assumes, in part, that only laws can penalize and combat hate-based phenomena; however, non-legally binding documents can and are used to interpret existing laws. They may also be used to socially denounce certain phenomena, through non-legal penalization, such as by calling for resignation of members, canceling events, and so forth.

In this context, the IHRA working definition should be considered as a complementary document—a guide rather than a law—and this is precisely where its significance lies. Legal systems of Western democracies have for decades recognized and protected basic principles such as equality and non-discrimination. The content of what is to be understood as equality and what constitutes discrimination changes over time and reflects developments in a given society. Therefore, it is not always necessary to change the law or to introduce new penalties; it is often sufficient to interpret the existing letter of the law in a manner applicable to changing social phenomena.

In this sense, legal systems are not considered inadequate because they lack specific laws against antisemitism, on the assumption that they do have provisions condemning broader categories of racism, hate speech, and discrimination. Antisemitism should be understood as a form of hatred expressed in hate speech and actions and also in discriminatory practices. Here, the working definition has value as an integrative document that interprets the scope of existing law relating to racism, hate speech, and discrimination by clarifying what anti-Jewish hatred is and how it manifests itself in today's context.

Not all forms of hatred, however, need a law to ban them. Laws do not always guarantee efficacy and speediness in times of social change, especially when it comes to shared principles and collective sentiments. In this respect, self and social condemnation (cancel culture) may be more compelling than a sentence issued after a yearslong judicial process. Especially nowadays, public censure, for example on social media (i.e., so-called "shaming"), may prove to be much more powerful than a lawsuit and is thus the basis of several movements for social change. In the case of antisemitism, could one honestly expect states to prosecute all those who express antisemitic content in speech or writing, via a simple Tweet or a "like" on Facebook? It would be unrealistic to expect law enforcement agencies to go after all such hate-based content on digital platforms.

Concerns for the encroachment on fundamental freedom notwithstanding, the decision about what is permissible and what is not is not to be made by the judges but rather by online forum administrators or committees within corporations. It is therefore ever more important to raise awareness about what constitutes bigotry in any form, including antisemitism in all its manifestations, outside the legal arena, and especially among those practitioners who in the near future will play a crucial role in overseeing and regulating public discourse.

Detrimental to Freedom of Speech?

At the opposite end of the spectrum of legal criticism against the IHRA working definition are those who claim that the quasi-legal status of the document is detrimental to the freedom of speech. By focusing primarily on the examples of Israel-related antisemitism, these detractors maintain that its implementation harms the fundamental freedom of speech among political activists against Israel.

Rebecca Ruth Gould, a UK scholar of Islamic Studies, argues that "the IHRA definition is a policy recommendation by a cluster of interest groups that has been tacitly granted that status of a quasi-law" (Gould, 2018) and has consequently become "a tool for censoring speech." (Gould, 2018). The author focuses exclusively on examples in which the IHRA working definition is employed

regarding controversies involving anti-Israel speech, raising concerns about the silencing of Israel critics. With respect to the legal use of the document, the author also claims that when “viewed from a legal perspective, the IHRA document is excessively particular and lacking in the generality necessary for legal legitimacy” (Gould, 2018).

It appears that the main point of this argument is to object the “excessive particularity” of the examples of anti-Israel antisemitism. This argument actually exploits the idea of freedom of speech and assumes that the growing understanding of Israel-related antisemitism is merely a way of dismissing any criticism about Israel. Yet, as Eve Garrard points out “what the definition does do is alert us to the fact that some ways of talking about Israel are antisemitic. The only view which this definition threatens is the view that criticism of Israel can never, ever, in any circumstances, be antisemitic” (Garrard, 2020).

Additionally, other critics, such as David Feldman, former director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism in London, have raised concerns that the increasing adoption of the working definition by universities infringes on academic freedom (Feldman, 2020).² Other scholars claim that the institutional use of the IHRA definition curbs academic freedom by ostensibly intimidating scholars critical of Israel (Zine et al., 2020). However, as David Hirsh, a UK scholar of sociology, puts it in his response to Feldman, the IHRA definition “is a framework for thinking about what is antisemitic, not a machine which can automatically designate certain kinds of speech as antisemitic” (Hirsh, 2020).

It must be emphasized in this context that the right to freedom of speech is not absolute. While the general consensus is that racist and xenophobic speech should be removed from any public venue, including universities, why should anti-Israeli antisemitism not be considered a form of unacceptable hate speech? Here, the main issue is acknowledging how antisemitism presently manifests itself in the anti-Israel discourse.

Denying that anti-Israel speech often becomes a platform for expressing antisemitic tropes is an ideologically driven outlook that professes to defend fundamental rights without considering the fight against antisemitism as part of that same struggle. Additionally, even when anti-Israel speech does not include expressly antisemitic tropes it can be virulent enough to inspire antisemitic attacks or an antisemitic atmosphere.

² In this respect, the author also argues that it would have a divisive effect, by privileging one group over the others.

If Jewish students on American and British campuses feel an atmosphere of harassment because of anti-Israel activities, their feelings pinpoint this discourse that is evolving under the banner of protecting human rights or freedom of speech. Likewise, if an anti-Israel demonstration leads to antisemitic attacks, it means that the anti-Israel atmosphere is poisonous enough to inspire antisemitism without necessarily being antisemitic in itself.

For this purpose, the IHRA document comprises 11 explanatory examples elucidating the manifestations of antisemitism, including contemporary antisemitism. The next section will discuss the phenomenon of Israel-related antisemitism in light of the IHRA document.

When Does Criticizing Israel Become Antisemitic?

Some of Israel's critics would like to have absolute freedom to advance their ideology, ignoring the restrictions imposed on hate speech, and at times justifying their anti-Jewish animosity via the pretext of advancing the Palestinian cause, or the human rights cause in general. In this respect, the BDS movement, established in 2005, gained some importance by being cloaked in political and human rights jargon.

At the same time, there is the risk that the IHRA definition might be abused to label any criticism of Israel as being motivated by anti-Jewish hatred in the very heated debate that is becoming increasingly polarizing.

The IHRA working definition provides important insight into the arduous task of distinguishing between anti-Israel stances and antisemitic anti-Zionism, through five out of eleven examples. This section will analyze these explanatory examples and the corresponding manifestations of antisemitism.

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.

The usual argument refuting this example is that opposing Israel as the state of the Jewish people should not be considered antisemitic as it stems from philosophical and political considerations against nation states. Yet, in the Israeli-Palestinian debate, the focus is only against Jewish statehood, while there is no argument against Arab or Palestinian nation states. Therefore, fundamentally anti-Jewish antagonism denies Jewish statehood, which is conceived as incompatible with principles of pluralism or humanism. This crosses the line of criticism because it does not focus on a specific policy deemed discriminatory

toward the non-Jewish citizens of Israel, but rather ascribes Israel's Jewishness as being inevitably incompatible with diversity.

Applying double standards by requiring of it [the State of Israel] a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

Against the argument that a double standard is applied to Israel and not to other countries, Israel's detractors usually claim that Israel is subject to international law standards like all other countries. Here, again the problem is to pinpoint when criticism, even when it is very harsh, is directed at a specific civil or criminal policy that Israel allegedly adopts or enacts toward its Arab citizens or the Palestinians and conversely is different from when it is a generally formulated statement that describes Israel as systematically violating international standards to cause the Palestinians to abandon their national aspirations. Subjecting Israel to different standards evidently reflects anti-Jewish sentiments as demonstrated, for example, by the UN human rights commission decisions finding fault mainly with Israel and ignoring the violations perpetrated in other countries.

Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.

This form of antisemitism is the ultimate manifestation of the contemporary mutation of classical Jew-hatred into Israel-hatred. One example is the "news" published by the Swedish daily *Aftonbladet* in August 2009, which claimed that Israel had extracted organs from Palestinian victims—an overt parallel of a blood libel. Likewise, the recent accusations of Israel deliberately infecting Palestinian prisoners with COVID-19 are manifestations of another historical antisemitic trope: the Jew as spreading the plague.

Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

Among the different forms of Holocaust abuse, Holocaust inversion is the most widely used in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It postulates that by embracing Zionism, Jews have become like their Nazi persecutors, while the victims are now the Palestinians. There is little doubt that this comparison is among the ugliest and most insulting possible, for a society that still bears the scars of the Nazi treatment of the Jews.

Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

Although not all harsh criticisms of Israel are imbued with antisemitic tropes, they may, nonetheless, still convey antisemitic sentiments or create an atmosphere of anti-Jewish hostility. When Jews are asked to provide explanations for Israel's

policies; when Jews are inherently associated with Israel and as a result are targeted in anti-Israel protests; or when Jews are requested to disavow their Zionist identity in order to be “acceptable” are all forms of antisemitism because it conflates Jews with Israel. The process is twofold: Israelis are considered cruel because of their Jewish connection, and Jews are considered spiteful insofar as they are associated with the Jewish state and as long as they identify themselves as Zionists.

Policy Recommendations

On the Employment of the IHRA Working Definition

In its first sentence the IHRA document states that it is a “**non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism.**” This basic principle should not be altered.

Recommendations

- The IHRA working document should be used as a tool to understand a phenomenon of hatred and to implement and interpret already existing laws, by-laws, and regulations of states, institutions, and organizations that relate to hate crimes and hate speech.
- The definition should be integrated into codes of ethics and statutes. For instance, a member of an organization advancing antisemitic tropes should be disciplined because they have violated that organization’s statutes and codes of conduct, while the definition should be employed merely to interpret such codes.
- When adopted by institutions, the definition should not be employed as a by-law. That means, it should not be employed to seek disciplinary or punitive measures against individuals.
- The definition should be employed in courts only as an interpretive tool to understand if certain conduct is driven by an antisemitic motive. For instance, if a court case deals with an attack on Jewish property, the definition may be used to clarify whether the attack had an underlying antisemitic motive.
- Monitoring agencies and organizations should refrain from using the expressions “violation,” “contravention,” or “infringement” with regard to the definition: The definition cannot be violated or breached, as it is not a

law. Instead, the definition should be used to label conduct or speech as “antisemitic according to the IHRA definition.”

On the Adoption of the IHRA Working Definition

Recently, the IHRA working definition of antisemitism has increasingly been adopted worldwide and has enjoyed a growing public and academic consensus: It has been adopted by more than 500 entities, with 350 academics signing a supporting letter in early April 2021, despite attempts to draft alternative definitions, most of which focus on the Israeli-related antisemitism. Lobbying and civic activities have further accelerated its adoption and have broadened the consensus, although political pressure and financial threats used to coerce adoption may generate a negative backlash. The IHRA’s working definition of antisemitism should be adopted for what it is and not due to pressure or punitive measures. The reason for its adoption even by countries who do criticize—sometimes even severely—Israeli policies is that these countries care about and feel responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their Jewish citizens.

Recommendations

- Law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities, and legal practitioners should organize training courses that include the IHRA document in the toolkit for combating hate crimes.
- Human rights activists, community leaders, and religious leaders—Jewish and non-Jewish alike—should organize seminars about including the IHRA working definition of antisemitism in their work and ensuring its dissemination and implementation at different levels. Indeed, the IHRA document should be another instrument for combating bigotry in general and promoting dialogue among communities.
- Given the growing importance of the IHRA document, toolkits for its effective employment should be produced, containing best practices and the major arguments relating to it.

On the Use of the IHRA Working Definition for Identifying Israel-Related Antisemitism

The IHRA working definition addresses several aspects of Israel-related antisemitism as this issue was a lacuna that needed to be addressed.

Recommendations

- The working definition should be employed with caution when assessing a single first expression or statement of antisemitism that is not followed by attacking or blaming an individual or an organization; the individual or organization's overall stance and behaviour should be assessed.
- Employing the IHRA document to identify anti-Israel antisemitism is important, but its use for pro-Israel activities and advocacy should be limited to cases in which antisemitic speech and motivation is clearly identified.
- Anti-Israel and anti-Zionist ideologies lead to anti-Israel discrimination, which is manifested at times in boycotts affecting not only Israelis or Jews but any entities doing business with Israel. Indeed, this can be plainly described as discrimination and does not necessarily amount to antisemitism. However, this does not rule out the possibility that this kind of discourse might include antisemitic tropes.
- While the IHRA document contains a number of explanatory examples referring to expressions of antisemitism, more examples could be added in the future, to keep abreast of the ever-evolving manifestations of antisemitism and Jew-hatred. They should only be added, however, after careful consideration of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and IHRA committees that originally drafted and subsequently adopted the working definition.

Conclusion

The criticisms against the IHRA working definition of antisemitism originate mainly in opposition to the examples of Israel-related antisemitism. This stance has several consequences: It denies the ramification of anti-Jewish expressions that are echoed in anti-Israel rhetoric; it deepens the political polarization around Israel for the sake of perpetuating a political position; it conversely affects the realm of human rights by legitimizing the abuse of international principles for the cause of anti-Zionism; and, finally, it weakens genuinely understanding the phenomenon as well as the will to combat it.

Overall, the IHRA definition of antisemitism is dismissed as the victory of Zionism over the Palestinians and its use is considered political to the point that it would serve to justify Israel's policy in the post-1967 territories. Specifically, it has been argued that the IHRA definition is an instrument for supporting the annexation of

areas disputed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (Mansour, 2020). The Palestinians' feeling of isolation and abandonment has become even more acute, considering the new amicable relations between Israel and some Arab states, which have led to normalization with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain and an agreement with Morocco. It was not this trend of normalization, however, that has impaired the Palestinians' primacy in the Arab world but rather the reconsideration of the traditional images of the "Jew" and "Zionist" in non-Arab or Muslim states and societies.

Given the heated debate around the IHRA working definition, it can be concluded that rather than limiting free speech, as critics of the IHRA document have accused it of doing, the document has indeed stimulated the discussion on contemporary antisemitism and its anti-Israel forms. The fear that the IHRA document serves to camouflage the actual pursuit of silencing anti-Israel critics is somehow antisemitic in itself, because it purports the existence of a Jewish "plot" to control and influence public speech.

As a final remark, it is quite striking that the different criticisms of the IHRA definition do not even marginally mention the organization itself and its mandate, the remembrance of the Holocaust. In fact, the Holocaust is largely denied or abused in anti-Israel speech, which minimalizes its scope or associates anti-Jewish persecution and extermination in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s with Palestinian suffering.

Appendix: The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism³

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.

³ <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

- 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.

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