

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) draft working definition of Antisemitism

The UK Government has asked all UK Universities to adopt the IHRA working definition. The University has set out below how it will give consideration to the draft working definition as part of its arrangements for responding to any concerns that are raised with it relating to allegations of Antisemitism. The working definition will be used as guidance to aid the University's understanding of Antisemitism as part of the disciplinary arrangements for staff and students, along with the additional considerations set out in the statement below.

Background:

The history of the working definition

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 combatting 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 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.

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 were suggested that 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 behaviour 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.

In 2016, when considering the IHRA Working Definition, the Home Affairs Committee called for two “clarifications” to be inserted into the IHRA definition and examples:

- a. It is not Antisemitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.
- b. It is not Antisemitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government’s policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.

The University has agreed to include the above clarifications alongside the IHRA working definition.

The University will continue to consult with its academic and professional staff community on the use of statements and definitions that support its equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) strategy. Freedom of Speech, within the law, for all staff, students and visiting speakers is guaranteed by the University’s Freedom of Speech, Academic Freedom and External Speakers Policy which will not be affected by the adoption of the Working Definition or of similar statements.

The University will review its adoption of the working definition in light of the anticipated new Freedom of Speech legislation that it is expected to be published in 2021. The University will also review the application and usefulness of the Working Definition from time to time, in light of other developments in EDI policy and practice.

Approved November 2020 by the Board of Governors following consultation with Academic Board and the Equality and Diversity Group.