

## *The “IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism”*

### **Fact-sheet and Recommendations issued by ECCP (European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine) and Free Speech on Israel\***

On May 2016 the Plenary of the IHRA adopted 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.”***

The above step was announced in an [IHRA press release](#)<sup>1</sup> which features this definition highlighted in a box. This is accompanied by a list of examples which, according to the IHRA Permanent Office, “may serve as illustrations to guide the IHRA in its work and to illustrate how antisemitism could manifest itself.” Among these examples are certain forms of criticism of the state of Israel. These examples are **not** part of the official IHRA working definition.

This so-called “*IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism*” is in fact a reworked version of the “Working Definition of Antisemitism” published by the European Union Monitoring Committee on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2005, but abandoned by its successor body, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), after the document came under heavy criticism. Criticism centered on the document's attempt to conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism, and the consequent risk to freedom of expression.

**Nothing apart from this brief definition of antisemitism was formally adopted by the IHRA member states at their Bucharest meeting in 2016.** This was confirmed by the IHRA Permanent Office in Berlin on 12 September 2017:

*[...] The Plenary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted the working definition of antisemitism under the Romanian Chairmanship on 26 May 2016. The working definition, like all IHRA decision, is non-legally binding. The working definition is the text in the box...*

It follows that other portions of the press release did **not** undergo formal approval by the plenary of member states. **Nevertheless, the IHRA press release, which is published on the IHRA website, has been promoted widely as the “IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism” for a purpose which is inconsistent with opposing genuine antisemitism.**

Our recommendations to governments, political parties, city councils, public and private institutions and all official entities:

**1. To acknowledge the fact** that the IHRA press release of 2016 is not the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism and should not be adopted by any organisation, because this document:

- Was never formally adopted by IHRA member states (only the short two-sentence definition was approved)
- Is being promoted in order to suppress European criticism of the state of Israel for its illegal settlement policy and violation of the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian People
- Is a risk for both freedom of expression and the fight against real Antisemitism in Europe

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1 [https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press\\_release\\_document\\_antisemitism.pdf](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf)

2. To **request an answer** from the IHRA as to:

a) why it failed to issue a clarification of what exactly was adopted in Bucharest as the definition, although it must have become aware of the confusion and debate arising from the misleading language used in the press release; and

b) why it remained silent and even issued a statement welcoming the decision of the UK government<sup>2</sup> to adopt the text of the press release, including the language in the examples which the IHRA had not adopted itself.

3. **To seek clarification** from the European Commission concerning the promotion of the 2016 IHRA press release as the IHRA's "legally non-binding working definition of Antisemitism" on its website<sup>3</sup>

We are recommending to our affiliated organisations to:

**1. Make contact with FRA** representatives in order to clarify what can be done to ensure that the EU (including its organs and institutions) does not promote/adopt the so-called "IHRA definition of antisemitism" which poses risks both to freedom of expression and to the fight against antisemitism in Europe, as well as risks to the EU's international obligations and commitments in connection with Israel and the Palestinian people.

**2. Urge their representatives** (MPs, MEPs, officials in City Councils etc) to implement above recommendations (1-3)

Notes:

\* [ECCP \(European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine\)](#) is a network of 42 European committees, organizations, NGOs, unions and international solidarity movements from 19 European countries, dedicated to the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, justice and equality

\* [Free Speech on Israel](#) is a Jewish-led UK organisation which was founded to counter the use of claims of antisemitism to suppress legitimate criticism of Israel.

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2 [https://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/ihra/2016.12\\_chair\\_statement\\_uk.pdf](https://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/ihra/2016.12_chair_statement_uk.pdf)

3 [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=50144](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=50144)