

Hello,

I am writing to oppose the encoding of the IHRA definition of antisemitism into law. Although I appreciate the sentiment of protecting Jewish people and fighting antisemitism, this particular definition dangerously conflates Jews with Israel. It would also deem criticism of Israel to be antisemitic. As a Jew who has loudly criticized Israel myself for its ongoing atrocities toward the Palestinian and Lebanese people, I am concerned that this definition would falsely label anyone critical of Israel's human rights abuses as antisemitic, while also distracting from actual antisemitic speech.

In light of Israel's various war crimes and human rights abuses, I, as a Jew, have no desire to be conflated with that state. The examples mentioned in the IHRA's definition can be interpreted to see Jews and Israel as inseparable - a monolith. The IHRA's definition of antisemitism was never meant to guide legal policy and the author himself has criticized its' application to college campus protests.

The passage of this bill could inhibit freedom of speech and could be used to punish nonviolent student protesters. Valid criticism of the actions of a government should not be considered hate speech or discriminatory simply because of which government it is.

Thank you,

Esti Bernstein