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The IHRA definition of antisemitism conflates criticism of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism. The Trump administration and others are actively trying to suppress free speech and the right to peacefully protest, and they are using the IHRA definition of antisemitism as a tool to do so. The weaponization of antisemitism intensifies discrimination and exclusion of vulnerable communities in the U.S.—including Jews.

Seven of the 11 “contemporary examples of antisemitism” in the IHRA definition involve criticism of the state of Israel, and not the Jewish people. The definition was established as a guideline, not an enforceable law. Defining antisemitism so broadly has chilling effects on free speech, scholarship and public dialogue about international affairs and current events.

Adoption of this definition by governments and institutions has been framed as a way to combat antisemitism, but, in practice, the definition has often been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel - a state - as antisemitic. Contrary to combating genuine antisemitism, it has the effect of suppressing non-violent protest and speech that's critical of Israel and/or Zionism. This definition has been used to target professors, students, grassroots organizations, human rights groups, and even US Congress members, who either document or criticize Israeli policies or human rights violations.

Many leading antisemitism experts, and scholars of Jewish studies and the Holocaust argue that the IHRA definition restricts legitimate criticism of Israel and undermines the fight against actual antisemitism. Even Ken Stern, the main drafter of the IHRA definition, recently reiterated his concerns about institutions adopting the IHRA definition stating concerns that it's “a blunt instrument to label anyone an antisemite.”

I condemn Hamas's attack on Israel, but also I am truly horrified by the slaughter of thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza, many, many of them children. I am afraid that adopting this definition will take away from me the right to voice my concerns. We need to fight, condemn, prevent and eliminate antisemitism, but this IHRA definition is not the right way to do that.