



B'nai Brith Canada Proposal on Formal Canadian Adoption and Application of the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism

B'nai Brith Canada has long supported the important work of IHRA. We commend the Canadian government's continued active support and initiative to preserve the importance of Holocaust remembrance and its application in the contemporary context. The work done by IHRA enables an effective process in combating the alarming increase of Holocaust denial and distortion and global antisemitism.

In our [National Post op-ed of November 5, 2018](#), we said:

*The federal government must acknowledge the growth of Holocaust denial, Nazi and neo-Nazi glorification and Holocaust obfuscation — and challenge this wherever it occurs, both inside and outside the country. To achieve this, Canada must increase awareness of, and **formally adopt, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism**, as this would serve as both a symbolic and pragmatic demonstration of Canada's commitment to combating antisemitism.*

The IHRA definition of antisemitism has a prior history. It first surfaced as a definition adopted by the European Union Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia in 2005. IHRA adopted the definition in May 2016, eleven years later.

Some suggest that the IHRA never intended the working definition to be adopted by individual countries; that it was meant to be a framework for the work of the organization as a whole. We believe this is not quite right. It was, indeed, meant to be a framework for the work of the organization as a whole. However, it is incorrect to say that the organization never intended the working definition to be adopted by individual countries. See, for example, the [IHRA fact sheet](#) of March 27, 2019.

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How the IHRA definition is to be used is the choice of each individual member country. IHRA as a whole has taken no position about how the definition should be used by member states of the Alliance. Currently, we understand the Permanent Office is surveying individual members about how each is using the definition. The results of the survey, once completed, will be available to IHRA members.

The United Kingdom, without enacting the definition in law, has significantly operationalized it. See the [UK House of Commons Library fact sheet](#) of October 4, 2018.

Today, only marginal figures self identify as antisemites. Yet some established figures hold and expound views which fall within the IHRA definition of antisemitism. The knee-jerk reaction of those who do not self identify as anti-Semites, but whom the definition puts into the antisemitic camp, is to fault the definition rather than acknowledge their own faults. However, that is a personal and political dynamic and not a conceptual one. The pushback is a not the result of a problem with the definition. It is rather an opportunity to raise awareness about what antisemitism really is.

The [IHRA definition has been adopted and endorsed](#) by these governments or jurisdictions:

United Kingdom (12 December 2016)
Israel (22 January 2017)
Austria (25 April 2017)
Scotland (27 April 2017)
Romania (25 May 2017)
Germany (20 September 2017)
Bulgaria (18 October 2017)
Belgium (14 December 2018)
Lithuania (24 January 2018)
Republic of North Macedonia (6 March 2018)
the Netherlands (27 November 2018)
Slovakia (28 November 2018)
Republic of Moldova (18 January 2019)
Czech Republic (25 January 2019)
Greek Ministry of Education (11 February 2019)
Hungary (18 February 2019)
France (20 February 2019). See

Canada is not part of this list. It should be. IHRA has taken note that the Government of Canada has stated it “strongly supports the working definition of antisemitism” but differentiates that statement from adoption and endorsement.

The [European Union Parliament has adopting a resolution](#) calling

"on the Member States and the Union institutions and agencies to adopt and apply the working definition of antisemitism employed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in order to support the judicial and law enforcement authorities in their efforts to identify and prosecute antisemitic attacks more efficiently and effectively ... "

On June 4, 2019, at the Global Forum of the American Jewish Committee, the Secretary General of the Organization of American states said:

“The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.... adopted the definition of antisemitism which as of now, as Secretary General, I make it the official definition of antisemitism for the work of the Organization of American States secretariat.....we ask every member state to adopt this definition as well”.

As an OAS member, Canada should respond positively to the Secretary General’s statement and indicate it will put in place steps to comply with his exhortation to member states.

The Parliament of Canada should, as a first step adopt a resolution similar to that of the European Parliament. Parliament should enact legislation incorporating the definition in the collection of statistical data by Statistics Canada and in **application by federal law enforcement** agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Parliament should further express the wish that Canada’s provinces and territories, for purposes of education curricula, adopt the definition and apply it in educational materials teaching about the Holocaust, genocide and antisemitism.

In its September 5, 2017, statement of IHRA priorities, Canada said it strongly supports the 2000 Stockholm Declaration on Holocaust Remembrance. Embracing the IHRA definition of antisemitism prior to the 20th anniversary of that instrument would be appropriate.

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The [Ottawa Protocol on Combating Antisemitism](#) was issued by a group of international parliamentarians November 9, 2010 and called for adoption of what is now the IHRA definition by

“Calling on parliaments and governments to adopt the EUMC working definition of anti-Semitism and anchor its enforcement in existing law”

It would be **appropriate for Canada’s Parliament, again, by virtue of the Protocol’s forthcoming 20th anniversary, to now proceed with formal adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.**