



Equality for all: rejecting the 'IHRA definition'

BACKGROUND

Governments at all levels – federal, state, local – as well as universities, schools, and other institutions are either discussing, adopting, or are under significant pressure to adopt definitions of antisemitism.

THE APAN POSITION

In any discussion on this topic, the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) recommends governments, institutions, and members of the public advocate against the adoption of any definition.

All forms of discrimination, bigotry, and dehumanisation must be addressed wherever they occur. Definitions of antisemitism – including the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition (IHRA), Universities Australia (UA), Nexus Definition, and Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) – are all instruments of anti-Palestinian racism and must be opposed.

They all demonstrate and entrench anti-Palestinian racism by: asserting that it is racist to criticise Zionism and/or Israel; elevating concerns about antisemitism above concerns about other forms of racism; erasing Palestinian political and cultural knowledge and insight; acting as tools for Nakba denial and denial of Palestinian self-determination; providing a mechanism to surveil and punish people for speaking truthfully about Palestine, Palestinians, Zionism and Israel; and suppressing protest rights and political advocacy.



If a definition is to be adopted, then we recommend a dictionary definition. Standard dictionary definitions are the only definitions of antisemitism that were not created in order to further entrench anti-Palestinian racism. One such definition includes the [Oxford Reference](#).

Additionally, by being precise and meaningful, they meet the qualities of a definition – qualities which the IHRA, UA, JDA, and Nexus Definition all lack ([as noted re the IHRA by Judge Fagan in the NSW Supreme Court](#)).

But more profoundly, APAN rejects the idea that definitions for separate forms of racism are needed. They are, in effect, divisive, antithetical to building community by pitting different groups against each other, and they undermine **the historical truth in this country that the founding and primary racism is that faced by First Nations people**. In this way, the IHRA, JDA, Nexus, and UA definitions are a form of anti-Indigenous racism. It is this racism, and the ongoing settler-colonialism, which must be first addressed.

Racism in all forms is indeed a serious problem. The Racial Discrimination Act works to account for this. The IHRA, JDA, UA, and Nexus definitions of antisemitism are not grounded in contemporary anti-racism scholarship or practice. In fact, they go against current research and evidence-based best practice, making the necessary work of eliminating racism – such as the Australian Human Rights Commission’s [National Anti-Racism Framework](#) – more difficult.

Thus, while APAN has developed a [thorough guideline and description of anti-Palestinian racism](#), we recommend against the adoption of a singular and unitary definition as a matter of principle.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [APAN’s Anti-Palestinian Racism at Universities open letter](#)
- [BDS Statement on JDA](#)
- [APAN framework on Anti-Palestinian Racism](#)
- [Silencing Palestine: Universities Australia and the new definition of antisemitism](#)
- [APAN Factsheet on IHRA](#)
- [The Jerusalem Declaration’s Fatal Flaw](#)
- [The IHRA definition will not help fight anti-semitism](#)
- [Toolkit: Demand “NO IHRA”](#)