# Strategies for Combatting Antisemitism

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**Key points:**

- The IHRA definition, including its examples, is one of the most useful tools in combatting antisemitism and its wide adoption should be encouraged.
- Organizations should consider using legal means to ensure Jews do not face discrimination, while being sensitive to freedom of expression.
- Hateful rhetoric against Jews and Israel online is strongly correlated with real-world antisemitic incidents. Social media companies should be encouraged to train moderators to recognize antisemitism and to be transparent about how they implement policies against hate.
- A full-time, ambassador-level special envoy would help Israel be more effective in the global war on antisemitism.

## Introduction:

Antisemitism has been on the rise in the West for the past decade, and the number of incidents as well as expressions of Jew-hatred on social media have exploded since October 7, 2023. There are several strategies that governments and organizations advocating for Israel can adopt, that are backed up by data or past successes. These include adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism, using legal avenues against institutions that discriminate against Jews and pushing social media outlets to effectively implement policies against hate. It would also be beneficial for Israel to have a full-time envoy dedicated to these efforts. Finally, the UK Jewish community's battle against antisemitic Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn can serve as a useful example for how a community can effectively combat antisemitism.

## IHRA:

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism is one of the most useful tools in fighting antisemitism – something that the Foreign Ministry already recognizes. It is impossible to fight something that cannot be defined.

It is important to encourage institutions of all kinds, from governments to universities to NGOs and even to corporations, to adopt the definition and use its parameters in their efforts to combat antisemitic hate crimes and discrimination. It is worth noting that the idea is not necessarily for new laws against hate crimes, hate speech or discrimination to be passed, but for the authorities to actively refer to IHRA when determining whether those crimes are antisemitic or not.

Alternative definitions of antisemitism have been promoted to weaken the understanding of the ties between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. It should be noted that the IHRA definition has been called the "gold standard," adopted by 45 governments and over 1200 entities around the world. Georgia adopted the IHRA definition in January 2024, making it the 35th US state to do so.

The IHRA working definition is: "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 examples that come with the definition are part and parcel of the definition, in that they demonstrate its real-life application, including the fact that anti-Israel actions and speech are usually thinly-veiled versions of antisemitism. Institutions adopting IHRA should be encouraged to consider the examples, as well, because without the examples, the definition is not particularly substantive or useful. Therefore, all entities need to understand that adopting the definition means adopting the examples.

**Legal:**

Most democratic countries have laws against antisemitism in various forms, even if they have robust protections for freedom of expression as the US does. While hate speech is protected by the US Constitution and some antisemitic speech may be protected in other democratic countries, if these incidents take place on a college campus or in the workplace, are pervasive or are part of a pattern of discrimination, or if an institution does not take reasonable measures to prevent or stop them, there could be a basis for legal action.

Two of the leading organizations on this front are the Louis D. Brandeis Center in

the US, and UK Lawyers for Israel. The US Department of Education has opened numerous investigations into universities following complaints by the Brandeis Center of discrimination against and harassment of Jews in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The Brandeis Center has also fought campus antisemitism in court. UK Lawyers for Israel has prompted investigations of university administrators and arrests of figures for illegal displays of support for terrorist groups.

Free speech and academic freedom are sensitive issues when it comes to combatting antisemitism. The Brandeis Center, which focuses primarily on campus antisemitism, has useful resources to help understand how to balance these values, including effective anti-discrimination policies and communications against antisemitism by administrators of prominent universities across North America.

**Social media:**

Antisemitism has been a constant on social media from its inception, allowing those who espouse views that were widely rejected in the West, certainly in the US, to find and amplify one another. Boundless Israel, an organization that uses data to develop better approaches to fighting antisemitism, has done extensive research on social media, specifically. They found a correlation between the proliferation of terms like "apartheid" and "colonialism" about Israel on social media and a rise in real-world incidents of antisemitism.

One of Boundless's most important findings has been that "pro-Israel messaging is stuck in an echo chamber." In other words, when messages are posted on social media meant to counter antisemitism, they are not reaching the audience that needs to hear it. Even the best messages will not break through the walls of vitriol on X, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, etc. against Jews and Israel. Positive messaging should continue, but its impact should not be overestimated.

The research points to a number of actions the Government of Israel can take. The first is to raise awareness of harm to minorities and other vulnerable groups in messages to educators, policymakers, law enforcement, and the business/tech community, and to emphasize that this includes Jews, who, contrary to what some in the West think, are not part of the white majority. Among the points to emphasize in these conversations is how online hate turns into crimes against

marginalized communities. In addition, note that the targeting of these communities undermines AmericanWesternetc. values.

Law enforcement and intelligence agencies are often less aware of antisemitism coming from the Left. In communications between Israelis and their foreign counterparts in such agencies about antisemitism, it is important to note that it is often cloaked in language related to human rights, social justice, or other seemingly legitimate political discourse, and encourage training in this area.

Advocacy that is aimed at encouraging social media companies to combat Jew-hatred on their platforms has been helpful, and the government should continue in its efforts, much of which have been conducted by the Justice Ministry domestically, and can also take place via Israeli missions abroad. That being said, it must be understood that this strategy has its limits because social media companies' engagement-based business models encourage posts that spark a heightened emotional response – including anger and fear. In addition, TikTok is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party which, despite its strict crackdown on communications, has allowed antisemitism to take root in China and to fester on the video-sharing platform.

The Interparliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism, which includes lawmakers from Israel, the US, Canada, the UK and more, has suggested the following proposals for social media giants' policies, which Israeli representatives can suggest: Tech platforms should have a specific and consistent policy for removing antisemitic content and users, and they should be transparent about how they implement them, including downranking of posts; antisemitism should be a specific category in social media companies' transparency reports, including reporting the volume of antisemitic content; the companies should facilitate training for platform moderators to identify antisemitism.

CyberWell, an NGO dedicating to fighting online antisemitism recommends legislation requiring platforms to disclose antisemitic content to regulators and make it available to researchers and NGOs, to disclose the rate of engagement with reported hateful content that is not removed, to allow external audits to ensure that the social media sites do not gain ad revenue from hateful content, and to address antisemitism in non-English languages, with an emphasis on Arabic.

Boundless recommends that businesses be discouraged from advertising on platforms that do not take action to remove hate, to incentivize the companies to enforce their own policies on antisemitic and other hateful content. This has had some success in the past.

**DEI:**

The proliferation of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion departments and the popularity of the ideology behind it on college campuses, in corporations, and beyond have been behind many of the recent manifestations of antisemitism that view Jews as an oppressor class and Israel as a colonial entity. Legacy Jewish organizations have tried to work with DEI over the years with little success. In recent years, and especially since October 7, there is increased awareness of the antisemitism embedded in DEI. While it is too early to say what has been effective in combatting DEI, legal action against discriminatory policies by campuses or actions – say, by US college professors who bully Israelis in their classes – could be possible. In addition, donors have begun pulling funds from universities that have not fought antisemitism on their campuses. That could backfire if the contributions are replaced by anti-Israel funders like Qatar, but exposing foreign actors pouring funds into American and other Western campuses with ulterior motives could serve as an important counterbalance.

Countering DEI has also become a major conservative cause in the US, specifically, as well as in other Western countries, though to a lesser extent. It is important to take care to keep antisemitism nonpartisan, in the sense that there are antisemites on the Right and on the Left, with different messages gaining prominence at different times and sometimes working in tandem. The message should be that decent people of all political stripes should join together to fight antisemitism, and not that antisemitism is part of, for example, the Republican fight against "wokeness."

**Special envoy:**

Israel's approach to antisemitism is somewhat muddled by the fact that there are units in multiple government ministries meant to address the problem. Ideally, the Foreign Ministry could work together with the Diaspora Affairs Ministry to coordinate messaging and pool resources to face this global challenge.

The appropriate conduit through which the Foreign Ministry should implement

the government policy recommendations is the special envoy for combating antisemitism, though the Foreign Minister himself could and should put his weight behind the envoy's efforts.

The position of special envoy should be upgraded, allowing the Foreign Ministry to have someone focused on combatting antisemitism full time, as well as staff to support her. Israel should not lag behind other countries in the seriousness with which it takes this position. The position should hold the rank and status of an ambassador, and be given to someone with a relevant background, such as experience in international law or academia, or to a diplomat who rose through the ranks of the Foreign Ministry and worked on related issues.

This is not a position for a celebrity envoy, as it is not so much about media appearances as it is about making the case for adopting policies against antisemitism to government entities, corporations, and other bodies.

**The Corbyn case:**

Perhaps one of the greatest successes of a Diaspora community in fighting a clear and present antisemitic danger was the British Jewish community vs. former UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn, who came from the party's far-left flank, rode a change in the party's by-laws to its leadership, campaigning as a populist and socialist leader. But he also was someone who laid a wreath on the graves of the terrorists who murdered Israeli athletes in Munich and made antisemitic comments while making sure to say "Zionists" or "Israel" instead of Jews, and publicly supported antisemites.

The UK Jewish community was united to an extent rarely seen in its opposition to Corbyn. From Jewish lawmakers in the Labour Party to community organizations to prominent media figures, diverse actors came together on a mission to expose and highlight Corbyn's antisemitism. The politicians resigned, people wrote in the newspapers and spoke on TV programs, and official complaints were filed within the party and submitted to government human rights watchdogs. Some of the aforementioned strategies were used, including legal means, and efforts to push for the inclusion of the IHRA definition's examples in Labour's guidelines on antisemitism. The community seemed to throw everything it had at Corbyn, trying all avenues.

The message became clear to the non-Jewish majority in the UK, with celebrities campaigning against Corbyn. Though antisemitism is not the only reason, Labour had a poor showing in the 2019 election and Corbyn did not become prime minister.

Two key lessons can be drawn from the Labour antisemitism scandal and the campaign against Corbyn. The first is that Diaspora Jewish communities are more effective at fighting antisemitism when they unite their top organizations, famous figures and others behind one cause. The second is that there may not be one specific strategy to fight antisemitic phenomena or figures. Rather, the approach of trying every angle and chipping away at the antisemitic challenge or threat may ultimately be most effective.