

From: bayarea chapter

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 12:22 PM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Cc: [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment opposing use of IHRA Definition in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

To the Members of the Instructional Quality Commission, CA Department of Education:

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), a national organization with 70 chapters nationally and over 300,000 supporters, strongly opposes the demand by particular organizations in the Jewish community, including the ADL, that the IQC and CDE include the seriously flawed International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism in further revisions of the ESMC.

This definition promotes the equation of criticism of Israel and/or Zionism with antisemitism. It is opposed by many Jewish organizations, [both within the United States and internationally](#). The IHRA definition invites governing bodies to violate our Constitutional right to free speech, because its application censors virtually all criticism of Israel. A major international effort is under way by Israel and lobby groups to brand advocacy in support of Palestinian human rights as “the new antisemitism” using this definition.

Seven out of 11 examples of antisemitism listed in the IHRA document are related to Israel. For instance, the IHRA contains this example: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.” This falsely associates Jews everywhere with Israel as their national homeland. It brands as antisemitic Palestinians and their supporters, including millions of Jews, who argue that peace and justice for both Palestinians and Israeli Jews is better served by principles of democracy and equal rights rather than the current ethno-national state of Israel, where a [nation state law](#) legalizes racist and discriminatory practices against Palestinians and non-Jews. Under

this definition, the book written by former President Jimmy Carter, “Peace Not Apartheid” would be criticized as antisemitic.

The Jewish people are not synonymous with Israel, even though Israel and its lobby groups try to claim that Israel represents all Jews. As a community rooted in Jewish traditions, Jewish Voice for Peace understands antisemitism as discrimination against, violence toward, or stereotypes of Jews for being Jewish. It does not include criticism of the policies or nature of Israel.

The IHRA definition is actually harmful to the Jewish community because the definition is overly vague. If almost everything is antisemitic, then nothing is.

Members of JVP, like others in the Jewish community, are extremely concerned about rising antisemitism in the United States; we are educating and organizing against it. We are clear that the increase in antisemitic attacks, together with the increase in racism and state violence against Black and other communities of color, including the Arab and Muslim communities, stems from growing white nationalism and white supremacy in the United States. To include in an Ethnic Studies curriculum the IHRA definition, which argues otherwise, is not in keeping with the liberatory principles of an ethnic studies curriculum and would be a tremendous disservice to young people of our state.

Additional information about the IHRA definition and why it must not be used is available at [THIS WEBSITE](#).

Submitted by:

Jewish Voice for Peace - Bay Area Chapter

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