

**From:** bayarea chapter

**Sent:** Thursday, November 12, 2020 9:44 PM

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

**Cc:** Tony Thurmond [email redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Suggested Edit to Preface, p. 4, Lines 66 to 69,

Dear Instructional Quality Commission,

This is a comment with a suggested edit to the current version of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. Please include this edit in your 11/20 Table of Submitted Line Edits.

**Include this footnoted definition of “antisemitism” in the Preface, p4, lines 66 to 69”: “Antisemitism is discrimination against, violence towards, or stereotypes of Jews for being Jewish**

The definition we are suggesting is a simple, powerful and accurate description of antisemitism that will provide California’s youth with the ability to criticize and recognize antisemitism when it occurs. It does not link antisemitism to criticism of the State of Israel or to Zionism, a political ideology that calls for Jewish self-determination in the state of Israel.

The following comments apply to all 3 of the definitions currently proposed for the curriculum: 1) Appendix C, Item 10 proposed as a footnote in the Preface and 2) ADL and IHRA definitions of antisemitism included in the HandOut on Antisemitism in the sample lesson plan "Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans included in Appendix D, List of Sample Lesson Plans. **All of these definitions link antisemitism to criticism of the State of Israel or to Zionism, a political ideology that calls for Jewish self-determination in the state of Israel.**

The comments are excerpted from Palestine Legal's ["Background on Efforts to Redefine Antisemitism as a Means of Censoring Criticism of Israel"](#)

**These definitions brand critics of Israel and advocates for Palestinian rights as anti-Jewish blurring the important distinctions between criticism of Israel as a nation-state and antisemitism.** In fact, Jewish people and the Israeli state are not one and the same. Over half the world's Jewish population lives outside of Israel. Over twenty percent of Israel's population is not Jewish. The inaccurate assumption that the Israeli government represents Jewish people worldwide is itself antisemitic because it necessarily attributes Israeli government policies and practices to all Jews. Many Jews, including Israeli Jews, join people of all faiths from across the globe in criticizing Israel. Those criticisms are not based on anti-Jewish hate, but on the policies of the government of Israel as a nation-state.

**Confusing criticism of Israel with antisemitism dangerously impedes efforts to combat antisemitism** because it distracts from white supremacists responsible for deadly attacks. "[R]ecent history shows a vicious cycle: as antisemitic violence on the right gets ever more dangerous, false accusations of antisemitism are weaponized by the right as political cover. And as this slander is made more and more, it comes to take over our popular definition of antisemitism, therefore making it harder to recognize, call out and stop the real thing," explained Jewish commentator Aaron Freedman.

The lead author of the IHRA/State Department definition of antisemitism, Kenneth Stern, opposes its use in college campuses in the United States because it undermines free speech principles necessary for critical thinking about both Israeli policy and antisemitism. In a 2016 New York Times op-ed, Stern wrote, "The definition was intended for data collectors writing reports about anti-Semitism in Europe. It was never supposed to curtail speech on campus."

Jewish Voice for Peace - Bay Area Chapter Council

Marge Sussman, Cindy Shamban, Dana Bergen, Clyde Leland, Eve Hershcopf, Ysh Schwartz, Emma Liss, Ellen Brotsky