

Combat Antisemitism: Urge Secretary Blinken to Use All of the Definitions at His Disposal

April 22, 2020

Sign on deadline: April 27th, 2021

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in urging Secretary Blinken to use all the definitions of antisemitism at his disposal to combat this ancient hatred and destructive ideology.

Two new definitions of antisemitism have been formulated and embraced by the Jewish community since the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a non-legally binding definition of antisemitism in 2016. However, the Trump Administration began using the IHRA definition in contexts throughout the federal government, including as the working definition for the Department of State.

Our letter asks Secretary Blinken to use all the tools at his disposal to effectively fight antisemitism: including the Nexus Document and Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) as well as IHRA.

Should you have any questions, or if you wish to join this letter, please contact Megan Kanne (Megan.Kanne@mail.house.gov) or Kate Durkin (kate.durkin@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Schakowsky's office **by close of business Tuesday, April 27th, 2021.**

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky, Mark Pocan, Andy Levin, Jamie Raskin, Pramila Jayapal

Members of Congress

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to thank you and the entire Biden Administration for your commitment to fighting against the rising threat of antisemitism, both globally, and here in the United States. We applaud your prioritization of combatting this ancient hatred. In carrying out this critical work, we urge you to consider multiple definitions of antisemitism, including two new definitions that have been formulated and embraced by the Jewish community.

In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), of which the United States is a member, adopted a non-legally binding definition of antisemitism. The Department of State began using this working definition at this time. In September of 2018, the Trump Administration announced that it was expanding the use of the IHRA definition to the Department of Education. This was followed by the 2019 "White House Executive Order on Combatting Antisemitism" that formally directed federal agencies to consider the IHRA working definition and contemporary examples of antisemitism in enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

While the IHRA definition can be informative, in order to most effectively combat antisemitism, we should use all of the best tools at our disposal. Recently, two new definitions have been introduced that can and should be equally considered by the State Department and the entire Administration. The first is the Nexus Document, drafted by the Nexus Task Force, "which examines the issues at the nexus of

antisemitism and Israel in American politics.” The Task Force is a project of the Knight Program on Media and Religion at the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism at USC. The definition is designed as a guide for policymakers and community leaders as they grapple with the complexities at the intersection of Israel and antisemitism.

Another valuable resource is the recently released Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA). The JDA is a tool to identify, confront and raise awareness about antisemitism as it manifests in countries around the world today. It includes a preamble, definition, and a set of 15 guidelines that provide detailed guidance for those seeking to recognize antisemitism in order to craft responses. It was developed by a group of scholars in the fields of Holocaust history, Jewish studies, and Middle East studies to meet what has become a growing challenge: providing clear guidance to identify and fight antisemitism while protecting free expression.

These two efforts are the work of hundreds of scholars and experts in the fields of antisemitism, Israel and Middle East Policy, and Jewish communal affairs, and have been helpful to us as we grapple with these complex issues. We believe that the Administration should, in addition to the IHRA definition, consider these two important documents as resources to help guide your thinking and actions when addressing issues of combatting antisemitism.

Once again, we thank you and President Biden for prioritizing this important matter and urge you to use all tools at your disposal to combat the threat of antisemitism.