

## Regarding your **Statement against Anti-Semitism**

### An Open Letter to the British Association of Social Workers

We, the undersigned Palestinian organizations, having read this BASW statement, would like to share our view on the biased International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) antisemitism definition. In this view we have been informed by Palestinian and Arab educators and intellectuals, and it represents the balanced view of the real meaning of discrimination, and is in line with the ethics of social work as they appear in the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and as quoted in BASW's statement:

*Social workers have a responsibility to challenge oppression on any basis, including (but not limited to) age, capacity, civil status, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, gender identity, language, nationality (or lack of), political beliefs, poverty, race, relationship status, religion, sex, sexual orientation or spiritual beliefs.*

We, as professional social workers, agree with and believe that antisemitism and all kinds of discrimination and oppression must be debunked and combatted. No expression of hatred for Jews as Jews or any other group should be tolerated anywhere in the world.

Antisemitism manifests itself in sweeping generalizations and stereotypes about Jews, regarding power and money in particular, along with conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial. We regard as legitimate and necessary the fight against such attitudes.

The fight against antisemitism must, however, be approached in a principled manner, lest it defeat its purpose. Through "examples" that it provides, the IHRA definition conflates Judaism with Zionism in assuming that all Jews are Zionists, and that the state of Israel in its current reality embodies the self-determination of all Jews. We profoundly disagree with this. The fight against antisemitism should not be turned into a stratagem to delegitimize the fight against the oppression of the Palestinians, the denial of their rights and the continued occupation of their land.

The fight against antisemitism must be deployed within the frame of international law and human rights. It should be part and parcel of the fight against all forms of racism and xenophobia, including but not limited to, Islamophobia, and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism. The aim of this struggle is to guarantee freedom and emancipation for all oppressed groups. It is deeply distorted when geared towards the defence of an oppressive and predatory state.



The practices of the Israeli state, including but not limited to: uprooting the vast majority of the natives and subjugating those natives who still live on the territory of historical Palestine as either second-class citizens or people under occupation; denying them their right to self-determination; and continually and systematically implementing ethnic cleansing against them, should be recognized as major discriminations based on race, religion and ethnicity.

It is odd that the IHRA definition suggests a symmetry between the Israel state and the Jews, as a religious group, regardless of the fact that under international law, the current state of Israel has been an occupying power for over half a century, is still preventing Palestinian people from being able to exercise self-determination, and is practising daily violations against them, and that this is recognized by the governments of countries where the IHRA definition is being upheld. In addition to this, the reputable international organization, Amnesty International, has concluded, based on daily reports, that Israel is an apartheid state. Furthermore, the IHRA definition potentially discards as anti-Semitic all non-Zionist visions of the future of the Israeli state, such as the advocacy of a binational state or a secular democratic one that represents all its citizens equally.

Israel can thus practise all kinds of violations including deporting its Palestinian citizens, or revoking their citizenship or denying them the right to vote, and still be immune from the accusation of racism. The IHRA definition and the way it has been deployed prohibit any discussion of the Israeli state as based on ethno-religious discrimination. Plenty of examples can be seen even in the mainstream media such as, evacuation of whole neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and in the Negev desert, killing and arresting children including mentally disabled children and children with special needs without being held accountable on any level, illegally demolishing Palestinian houses and endangering civilians, etc.

Furthermore, in the state of Israel, military conscription strips the Israeli social workers and psychologists from those professions' values and leads them to play a role in persecution through their military action that makes them part of the persecution machine. This is not only in contradiction with IFSW and BASW as well as all other social workers' associations, but also can only serve the oppressor's side and stands in line with its unlawful practices.

BASW said in the statement: "The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an association to discriminate against or victimise its members, prospective members, guests and associates, on the basis of race and religion." Yet, that is exactly what the current state of Israel is doing, discriminating against non-Jewish communities based on their religion and race, denying them their rights - uprooting people from their homeland, engaging in military aggression and violent attacks against civilians, denying them the right to unionise...and we could continue, to make this a long list.



Their support of the IHRA definition makes the British Association of Social Workers stand in line with the oppression of the Palestinian people on one hand, equate Judaism and Zionism on the second hand, and contradict all IFSW ethics, let alone human rights, on a third hand.

Statements against discrimination against all ethnicities, religions and races should be equally adopted and no oppression should be accepted or tolerated whoever it is practised by, including the current state of Israel.

We urge BASW to commit to the profession's values and ethics and stand in line with the oppressed, and differentiate between the Jews' just rights and the unjust criminal practices of the current state of Israel, and to redevelop its statement based on the profession's ethics and international human rights.

Signed by:

Palestine-UK Social Work Network (PalUK)

Association of Human Rights Defenders

Community Center For Training And Development

Aida Youth Center

Lajee Center

Shoruq Organization

Ibda'a Cultural Center

Laylac Center

Tanweer Center for Culture and Creativity

National Union for Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations – NUNGO

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

Alrowwad Cultural and Arts Society

Githour Center

Woman Activity Center- Dheisheh Camp

Woman Activity Center - Bethlehem

