



June 29, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our grave concern over the recent flood of antisemitic attacks around the country and around the world. We appreciate your statements strongly condemning the horrific behavior we have seen, but this is a time that calls for action, not just words.

Specifically, we request that your administration make it a priority to pass the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act,¹ which would allow both the Department of Justice and the Department of Education to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism in determining whether an investigation is warranted under their statutory anti-discrimination enforcement authority.

When the Act was initially introduced, critics complained because the IHRA definition contains examples of the kinds of problematic anti-Zionism that cross the line into anti-Semitism. There is no clearer evidence than recent events as to why the definition includes those examples, and why it is so desperately needed.

Around the world, antisemitic attacks in some places have shot up over 400% since the most recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East,² with anti-Semites using the conflict as an excuse to ramp up their rhetoric and let out their hate. In cities across the country, hundreds of synagogues, Jewish community centers, kosher restaurants, Jewish owned businesses, and individual Jewish people have been targeted and attacked, beaten and bullied, cursed and demonized, all because they are Jewish. In every instance, the thin veneer of “anti-Zionism” has been shattered by open expressions of antisemitism, including calling for the killing of Jews. On college campuses, in between dodging protests outside of Hillel buildings, ignoring threats from fellow students and removing Nazi symbols, Jewish students have been subjected to campaigns supported by faculty and student groups alike that call Israel a colonialist settler state, negate the history of their people, deny the deep Jewish connection to the Jewish State, and dismiss the lives of their co-religionists as

¹ Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019, S. 852, 116th Cong. (2019).

² Jemima McEvoy, *Synagogue Attacks and Slurs: Jewish Community Rocked by Rise in Anti-Semitism Amid Israel-Gaza Fighting*, FORBES (May 20, 2021, 2:30 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2021/05/20/synagogue-attacks-and-slurs-jewish-community-rocked-by-rise-in-anti-semitism-amid-israel-gaza-fighting/?sh=7b3641502262>.

unimportant, if they are even worth mentioning at all. Of course, none of this is really surprising. During the last war in Gaza, there was also a predictable increase in antisemitic incidents.³

Our government has a responsibility to protect its citizens from acts of hate and bigotry motivated by discriminatory animus- including antisemitism- and must be given the tools to do so. Valid monitoring, informed analysis and investigation, and effective policy-making all require uniform definitions. It is no longer acceptable for officials charged with protecting people from antisemitism to not have a definition of antisemitism that they can use in making their determinations. It is equally unacceptable to insist on a definition of antisemitism that does not include even the most troubling of anti-Zionist sentiments.

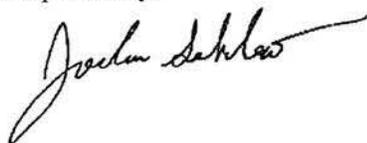
To be clear, antisemitic speech should not be criminalized or contained; it should just be labeled correctly. But what we are seeing today is criminal activity, not protected speech. For too long, the conflation of speech with conduct, and antisemitism with criticism of Israel, has allowed antisemites to commit heinous acts and then claim that they were merely expressing political views. When anti-Zionism crosses over into antisemitic acts, it can and should be stopped.

There is a reason the IHRA definition is already used by the State Department and dozens of other countries. More importantly, there is a reason hundreds of major Jewish organizations across the world and across political and religious spectrums, representing Jewish people of all ages and backgrounds, have adopted the definition and urge others to as well. It is because they all agree it best reflects their shared lived experience and the realities of how antisemitism actually manifests today.

According to the FBI, the majority of religiously motivated hate crimes in the United States are committed against Jewish people⁴ That has been true for some time, and that number is on the rise, despite the fact that Jews make up less than 2 percent of the population. There is much work to be done to reverse these terrifying trends, and we encourage you to take all of the necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of your Jewish citizens. But that work starts by properly defining the problem, and we ask that you make that a priority.

Thank you for your attention to this gravely important matter.

Respectfully,



Jordan Sekulow
Executive Director

CC: Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

³ *Id.*

⁴ Erin Donaghue, *New FBI Data Shows Rise in Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes*, CBS NEWS (Nov. 13, 2018, 8:24 PM), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-hate-crimes-up-new-data-shows-rise-in-anti-semitic-hate-crimes/>.