

RESOLUTION TO FEDERAL NDP CONVENTION 9-11 APRIL 2021

WHEREAS

The IHRA working definition of antisemitism and its examples have been used to seek to silence criticism, including that of NDP caucus members, of serious violations of Palestinian human rights and international law by Israel, and

WHEREAS

We strongly condemn antisemitism, Islamophobia, white supremacy, and all forms of hatred and intolerance

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

[That the following be added to Section 4.1(f) of the NDP 2018 Policy Book]

While strongly condemning antisemitism, opposing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition with its examples of antisemitism, which have used to attempt to silence those who denounce grave abuses of human rights of the Palestinian people, and those who speak out against the illegal occupation and annexation of Palestinian lands, unequal treatment of Arab-Palestinians in Israel, and the inhumane blockade of Gaza.

BACKGROUND ON IHRA DEFINITION AND EXAMPLES

New Democrats strongly condemn all forms of hatred, including antisemitism, Islamophobia, and white supremacy.

Antisemitism is an imminent and increasingly deadly threat to Jews, as we have witnessed again recently with the antisemitic attacks on a Montreal synagogue. But the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and examples poses a serious threat to freedom of expression and those who speak out in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and challenge Israel's grave violations of human rights and international law. The IHRA adopted a working definition of antisemitism and eleven examples, at a 2016 meeting of 31 country delegations: www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf

Seven of the eleven examples of the IHRA definition specifically mention Israel and threaten those who speak out in solidarity with the Palestinian people; they have been condemned by many civil liberties groups including the BC Civil Liberties Association, academics, labour activists, and respected groups such as Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East. Over 450 Canadian academics recently signed a letter opposing the definition and pointing to threats to academic freedom arising from it. www.ijvcanada.org/open-letter-from-canadian-academics-opposing-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism The original author of the definition, Kenneth Stern, has spoken out in opposition to the way in which it is being used to silence opposition to Israeli government policies in the academic community. IJV has a webpage at www.noihra.ca which gives a comprehensive overview of the history and concerns with the definition. As well, the federal NDP has issued a number of statements in the past voicing opposition to the definition: "We have some concerns that the IHRA definition and its associated examples could undermine those who wish to speak out in favour of the human rights of the Palestinian people" [Oct 2019] and it "could be a threat for people who legitimately denounce grave human rights abuses by the government of Israel against Palestinians." [June 2019]

Concerns about the abuse of the IHRA definition and examples are not just hypothetical. The IJV website documents many recent illustrations of attempts to silence criticism of Israel using the definition. Recently, when NDP MPs Charlie Angus and Leah Gazan spoke out about the denial of Coronavirus vaccines to Palestinians in the occupied territories, they were attacked using the IHRA definition as a weapon. As noted above, antisemitism is a serious and growing concern. But the IHRA definition and examples are not the tools to fight antisemitism. IJV has in fact proposed an alternative Working Definition of Antisemitism: "Antisemitism is racism, hostility, prejudice, vilification, discrimination or violence, including hate crimes, directed against Jews, as individuals, groups or as a collective – because they are Jews. Its expression includes attributing to Jews, as a group, characteristics or behaviours that are perceived as dangerous, harmful, frightening or threatening to non-Jews."

We urge you to join us in speaking out against the dangers of the IHRA definition and its examples, by supporting the Resolution which is being circulated widely to federal NDP riding associations (EDAs), labour councils, and other groups. If you are a New Democrat, work to have your EDA adopt this resolution and send it to Convention. Deadline for resolutions is February 8. Information on the NDP Convention and resolution process is here:

www.ndp.ca/convention2021