

SCOOP

Biden admin 'enthusiastically embraces' full IHRA definition of antisemitism

Secretary of State Tony Blinken acknowledged the administration's position in a recent letter to the American Zionist Movement



Then-Deputy National Security Advisor Tony Blinken speaks at the White House in 2014.

By [Melissa Weiss](#) · March 1, 2021

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Secretary of State Tony Blinken wrote that the Biden administration “enthusiastically embraces” the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, including its full

list of examples.

In a letter to American Zionist Movement President Richard Heideman obtained by *Jewish Insider*, Blinken said the administration is “eager to work with allies and partners to counter Holocaust distortion and combat anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance abroad while we strengthen our efforts at home.”

Read the full text of the letter here.

Among the examples listed in IHRA's definition of antisemitism are “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis,” “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor” and “applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.”

The IHRA definition was codified in an executive order signed by former President Donald Trump in December 2019 that added antisemitism to the list of types of discrimination prohibited by federal law. Prior to that, it had been used as guidance in the administrations of former presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

William Daroff, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which last month applauded the administration for its support of the definition, told JI that the definition is a “helpful tool in combating antisemitism” and that the administration’s adoption of it “reflects the fact that the IHRA definition is the gold standard.”

“There’s recognition by the Biden administration of the so-called ‘new antisemitism,’ which is where anti-Israel activity is often a proxy for anti-Semites,” Daroff said, “That it’s more acceptable, unfortunately, to call someone a ‘dirty Israeli’ than it is to call them a ‘dirty Jew.’ And we see this brand of antisemitism all over the world. It doesn’t mean it’s the only manifestation of antisemitism, it doesn’t mean that all criticism of Israel is antisemitic, but it reflects the reality of this growing plague.”

In recent weeks, a coalition of left-leaning Jewish organizations — including J Street, Americans for Peace Now and the New Israel Fund — urged the Biden administration to reject the codification of the definition, noting in particular its opposition to the examples provided in the definition, which they warn have “the potential to undermine core freedoms, and in some cases already has.”

The definition has been adopted by dozens of countries in recent years. Last week, Kentucky became the first state to officially adopt the definition.