

Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association
Al-Haq – Defending Human Rights
Hurriyat- Centre for Defence of Liberties and Civil Rights
Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights
Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies
Independent commission for Human Rights (Observer)



Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights
Addameer Association for Human Rights
Defence for Children International – Palestine
The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
Muwatin Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (Observer)

Date: 4 February 2025

Re: PHROC calls on Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Tánaiste Simon Harris, and the Government of Ireland to withdraw its endorsement of the IHRA definition

Your Excellencies, Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Minister Simon Harris,

The Palestinian Human Rights Organisations Council (PHROC), a coalition of the leading Palestinian human rights organisations, are writing to you, concerning and condemning the Irish governments endorsement of the repressive *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)* definition of antisemitism, which is designed to quash legitimate criticism of Israel and which has been [used](#) to undermine, silence and stigmatize human rights defenders advocating for the inalienable human rights of the Palestinian people. On 16 January 2025, then Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin [announced](#) Ireland's 'endorsement of the non-legally binding Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism.'

PHROC recalls the 2022 [Report](#) of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, E. Tendayi Achiume which outlines the risks inherent in the IHRA definition. The Special Rapporteur called attention 'to the politically motivated instrumentalization of the fight against antisemitism, which is increasingly linked to the adoption, promotion and implementation by States of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism' and cautioned 'against reliance on the working definition as a guiding instrument for and at the United Nations and its constituent entities.'

As noted by the Special Rapporteur, the IHRA definition 'is largely instrumentalized on the basis of the 11 "contemporary examples of antisemitism" attached to it', seven of which relate to the State of Israel. The definition's supposed 'non-legally binding' status obscures the real negative impact adoption of the definition has, since its influence on policy and practice, of governments and of private actors such as schools and universities 'effectively helps to undermine certain co-existent rights, without offering any remedy or means to legally challenge such violations.'

PHROC warns that measures to oppose racism and hate speech, must not be permitted to suppress legitimate criticism of Israel over its international crimes. In doing so, the Irish government is directly undermining protected rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, and compromising the narrative and struggle of the Palestinian people, including challenges to Israel's settler-colonial, apartheid and genocidal regime.

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In March 2022, during Dáil Éireann (Parliament) Debates on the question of the Irish Government's adoption of the IHRA definition, the then Minister for Equality recognised that the IHRA definition contained inherent problems, [stating](#) that 'Ireland was supportive of the adoption by IHRA of the non-legally binding Working Definition of Antisemitism. However, this support was conveyed on the basis that while Ireland was supportive of the definition we did not consider the illustrative examples that followed to be an integral part of the definition.'

International scholars of antisemitism, including leading Jewish scholars of antisemitism, and scholars in fields such as Jewish, Holocaust, Israel, Palestine and Middle East studies, share these concerns warning that the IHRA definition is unclear, and is 'weakening the fight against antisemitism', and proposed an alternative definition of antisemitism as established in the Jerusalem [Declaration](#) on Antisemitism.

PHROC members were included as some of the 104 Palestinian, Israeli, and international civil society organizations which in 2023 strongly [urged](#) the United Nations (UN) not to endorse the IHRA definition of antisemitism: 'As an international organization committed to the universal promotion of the rule of law and human rights, the UN should ensure that its vital efforts to combat antisemitism do not inadvertently embolden or endorse policies and laws that undermine fundamental human rights, including the right to speak and organize in support of Palestinian rights and to criticize Israeli government policies.'

PHROC recalls and recognizes the critical and progressive role which Ireland has played in upholding the international legal framework. Ireland's several legal analyses submitted to the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice have consistently advocated for accountability and respect for the rule of law. Ireland's endorsement of the IHRA definition however, could have the effect that human rights advocates who seek to compel the enforcement of legal obligations arising, for example, from the finding of the International Court of Justice that Israel's conduct in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constitutes an unlawful violation of Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, are unjustly accused of antisemitism as understood by reference to the IHRA.

In an international environment of shrinking space for human rights defenders, Ireland's decision is both unfortunate, counter-productive, and unlikely to contribute to real progress in the struggle against racism. The Irish people have been clear in their criticism of Israel's conduct against Palestinians, however their right to engage on behalf of human rights for all may now be punished by the weaponization of false charges of antisemitism against them. PHROC calls on Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Tánaiste Simon Harris, and the Government of Ireland to reflect on its decision and withdraw its endorsement of the IHRA definition with immediate effect.

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Yours Sincerely,

Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council comprising:



Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association
 Sahar Francis
 General Director



Addameer Association for Human Rights
 Alaa Skafi
 Acting General Director



Al-Haq
 Shawan Jabarin
 General Director



Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
 Issam Younis
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The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
 Raji Sourani
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مجلس منظمات حقوق الإنسان الفلسطينية
Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council



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الهيئة المستقلة
لحقوق الإنسان
ديوان المطالم

**Independent
Commission
for Human
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