

August 20, 2025

Dear Board of Trustees of Croton-on-Hudson,

I am saddened to learn that Croton has decided to consider the adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism¹. The intent may be genuine; we should all, as individuals and as a community, be committed to fighting antisemitism. However, the IHRA definition pushes the ideology that support for Palestinians is inherently antisemitic because it wrongly conflates Judaism (an ancient religious and cultural identity) with Zionism (a recent political project).

The vague nature of the definition and its applications, as interpreted through examples they provide, have been weaponized to threaten and silence people for speaking out against Israel's ongoing genocide of Palestine^{2,3,4}. The effect of this is to stifle free and intellectually honest discussion of the harms that the Palestinian people have been subjected to for over 100 years⁵. It does nothing to reduce antisemitism.

As a parent with a student in Croton public schools I am deeply concerned about the effect of adopting this easily weaponized definition of antisemitism on our students' education. Research has shown that where the IHRA WDA has been adopted it is implemented in ways that lead to the targeting of Palestine advocates (including Jews), suppress free speech, and foster anti-Palestinian racism⁶. Students' ability to learn how to engage in free and open discussion of current and historical events around Israel and Palestine and develop critical thinking skills will be curtailed. All of these effects act counter to the goals of an educated and morally grounded student body.

I do not want the IHRA working definition of antisemitism implemented in our community.

Thank you,

Amber J Martin, Ph.D.

¹ IHRA WDA <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

² <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/06/how-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism-is-chilling-palestine-advocacy-in-europe/>

³ https://www.democracynow.org/2023/6/1/headlines/cuny_law_graduate_faces_death_threats_after_condemning_israels_treatment_of_palestinians

⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/columbia-student-mahmoud-khalil-was-detained-arrest-warrant-trump-admi-rcna202946>

⁵ Bangstad, S. (2025). The Palestine Exception to Academic Freedom and the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2025.2494669>

⁶ <https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/ihra-definition-suppresses-necessary-debate/>

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Brian Pugh](#); [Nora Nicholson](#); [Cara Politi](#); [Len Simon](#); [Maria Slippen](#)
Cc: [Bryan Healy](#)
Subject: Fwd:
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 12:56:37 PM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

Dear Mayor Pugh and Trustees of the Village of Croton on Hudson:

I am writing to express my support of the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in our village. With the alarming rise of antisemitism around the world and even within our small community, my Jewish friends and neighbors deserve to feel safe and protected at home. This definition will help to identify hate and for leaders to respond appropriately. Because this has already been adopted by Westchester County, New York State, and the United States, I support Croton on Hudson adopting the same framework.

Sincerely,
Karin and Mark Stinga

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Brian Pugh](#); [Maria Slippen](#); [Len Simon](#); [Nora Nicholson](#); [Cara Politi](#)
Cc: [Bryan Healy](#); [REDACTED]
Subject: Village adoption of IHRA definition
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 12:53:13 PM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

Please try to send this email:

I drafted a quick email that some friends are going to send who can't come tonight (Jewish and non-Jewish). Sharing in case it's helpful for your circle!

Dear Mayor Pugh and Trustees of the Village of Croton on Hudson:

I am writing to express my support of the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in our village. With the alarming rise of antisemitism around the world and even within our small community, my Jewish friends and neighbors deserve to feel safe and protected at home. This definition will help to identify hate and for leaders to respond appropriately. Because this has already been adopted by Westchester County, New York State, and the United States, I support Croton on Hudson adopting the same framework.

Sincerely,
Lainie and David Parker

Lainie E. Parker, Esq.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Board of Trustees](#)
Subject: Email to support the adoption of IHRA definition of antisemitism
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 6:08:54 AM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

Hi, my family and I are out of country and unable to attend the board meeting today, but I want to email on behalf of myself, my wife, and my two children to support the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism for Croton

On Hudson. Both of my children have experienced moments of antisemitism in our town and schools. Accepting this definition of antisemitism acts will show that you support their right to co-exist peacefully in our town, and support the rights of all minorities.

There are 40 other countries that have embraced this definition to combat antisemitism, which constitutes the largest percentage of religious-based hate crimes in the US. This definition does not preempt criticism of Israel's behavior, or criticism of the administration. As a proud Jew I am abhorred by the actions of the current Israeli administration, while also fervently defending Israel's right to exist in peace alongside a Palestinian state. This widely accepted definition can allow all of these beliefs to exist at the same time...in the same way that I am abhorred by the current US administration, but I am fervently proud of the US and its right to exist. The definition merely prevents the insinuation that the EXISTENCE of Israel is a racist idea. And more importantly, it shows that our representatives, and our town, defend the rights of the Jewish minority and my children to peacefully exist.

Here's a list of countries that have accepted the definition, in addition to Westchester County. If ok for them, should be a straightforward decision for us.

* Albania * Argentina * Australia * Austria * Bahrain * Belgium * Bosnia and Herzegovina * Brazil * Bulgaria * Canada * Colombia * Costa Rica * Croatia * Cyprus * Czech Republic * Denmark * El Salvador * Estonia * Finland * France * Germany * Greece * Guatemala * Hungary * Ireland * Israel * Italy * Kosovo * Latvia * Lithuania * Luxembourg * Moldova * Netherlands * North Macedonia * Panama * Philippines * Poland * Portugal * Romania * Scotland * Serbia * Slovakia * Slovenia * South Korea * Spain * Sweden * Switzerland * United Kingdom * United States * Uruguay

Thank you for your time and work on behalf of our wonderful town.

Eric Weinberg
Ara Kurnit
Juliet Weinberg
Bennett Weinberg

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Board of Trustees; Brian Pugh](#)
Subject: Faith leaders calling for the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.
Date: Monday, August 18, 2025 5:00:34 PM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

(Since you've included their email, please add this one from Taher Shafie and me. I know others are also very against this policy.)

To Mayor Brian Hugh and the Board of Trustees

I understand that many faith leaders in Croton on Hudson want the village to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism

As a Croton resident, I too find it unsettling to hear about a rise in antisemitic incidents in our village, which has a history of tolerance (outside of some troubles during the McCarthy era). Although I only have second-hand knowledge of these latest incidents, I find it particularly abhorrent to hear about hateful attacks on children, whether the victims are Jewish school kids being harassed in Croton or Palestinian children being bombed and starved in Gaza.

But despite the growing acceptance of the IHRA definition, many Jewish scholars, including Bard professor Kenneth Stern, the definition's author, have advised governments against adopting the IHRA definition for fear it will inhibit free speech—the cornerstone of American democracy--and ultimately lead to more antisemitism.

I wonder if many people truly understand the implications of the IHRA definition. Yes, it says criticizing Israel is not antisemitic per se, but there are a lot of exceptions. For example, the IHRA definition says it is antisemitic to say Israel is a racist state. That would suggest it is antisemitic to say that Israel engages in apartheid, as many human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the UN and even Israel's own human rights organization, B'Tselem, have documented, as has the International Court of Justice. We can also see the evidence of Israel's apartheid in documentaries like Academy Award winner "No Other Land" or the new BBC documentary "The Settlers." Israel, and many of its supporters, consider the aforementioned groups and documentaries antisemitic.

Under this definition, it would also be antisemitic to compare "current Israeli policies" to those of Nazi Germany. Last year then-New Yorker writer Masha Gessen seemed to do just that, by likening Gaza to the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe. Is Gessen, a Jewish immigrant from the Soviet Union, an antisemite? Germany (whose citizens do not have the same free speech protections that Americans have) seems to think so. It revoked a humanitarian award named after Hannah Arendt that was to be given Gessen in 2023 after her comments were published. It goes without saying that anyone who thinks Israel is committing genocide – which includes many Israeli scholars, writers and its human rights organization--would also be considered antisemitic.

There are serious consequences to this overly broad definition of antisemitism. For one, it is being weaponized by the Trump administration to try to deport international students who have criticized Israel's brutal assault in Gaza, saying they are emboldening antisemitism and

threatening our foreign policy goals, which are allied with Israel. Trump is also looking at whether he can arrest and/or deport US citizens, presumably on the same grounds. Fortunately many Americans know these efforts are unconstitutional, and our courts are pushing back. But it's too soon to celebrate. Meanwhile, the IHRA definition is also being used by Trump to bully universities to drastically change their curriculum, publications and faculty, silencing Palestinian voices and history.

Antisemitism reportedly rises during times of heightened conflict between Israel and Palestinians. But antisemitism has also risen over the past year and a half because the protests against Israel's war on Gaza were counted as antisemitic events, according to the Anti-Defamation League. And that's despite the fact that many Jewish students who were involved in these protests say they were overwhelmingly peaceful.

So yes, let's teach our children to respect people who are different from them—regardless of race, religion, gender or anything else. Let's teach them not to be bullies. Let's also protect the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech in this country.

But castigating many people concerned about human rights as antisemites won't do that. And it won't make people view Israel in a benign light. It will only make the term "antisemitism" meaningless.

Taher Shafie
Michelle Celarier
Croton on Hudson

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Board of Trustees](#)
Subject: IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 11:25:34 AM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

Dear Croton Board of Trustees,

As a Croton resident, I'm writing to support the Board adopting the IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism.

As Croton's municipal government has supported many communities of people through-out the years and made our village a place where 'hate has no place', it would make a lot of sense to adopt a resolution that condemns hateful language and actions against a group of people, especially one that has faced a disproportionate rise in attacks against it in recent years.

As a reference point of which I'm sure you are all aware, the Democratic administrations of President Biden and of New York Governor Hochul adopted this definition. Additionally, 37 US states adopted the definition, alongside 45 countries, including 26 EU nations (including Germany and France) and other nations including, but not limited to, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Colombia, South Korea, and Switzerland. Recently, the Republic of Ireland and Harvard University adopted the Definition.

Closer to home, Westchester County adopted the Definition in 2022, the Town of New Castle adopted it in 2021, and Rye Town, North Salem, and our close neighbor Ossining's government have unanimously adopted the definition.

Thanks for your attention. Adopting this resolution will demonstrate to your constituency that hate against anyone truly has no place in Croton.

Sincerely,

Seth Katz

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Board of Trustees](#)
Subject: IHRA
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 7:12:27 AM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

Hi, my family and I are out of town and unable to attend the board meeting today, but I want to email on behalf of myself, my husband, and my three children to support the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism for Croton On Hudson.

Accepting this definition of antisemitism will show that you support everyone's right to co-exist peacefully in our town, and support the rights of all minorities.

There are 40 other countries that have embraced this definition to combat antisemitism, which constitutes the largest percentage of religious-based hate crimes in the US. This definition does not preempt criticism of Israel's behavior, or criticism of the administration. I am abhorred by the actions of the current Israeli administration, while also fervently defending Israel's right to exist in peace alongside a Palestinian state. This widely accepted definition can allow all of these beliefs to exist at the same time.

The definition merely prevents the insinuation that the EXISTENCE of Israel is a racist idea. And more importantly, it shows that our representatives, and our town, defend the rights of the Jewish minority and all children to peacefully exist.

Here's a list of countries that have accepted the definition, in addition to Westchester County. If ok for them, should be a straightforward decision for us.

* Albania * Argentina * Australia * Austria * Bahrain * Belgium * Bosnia and Herzegovina * Brazil * Bulgaria * Canada * Colombia * Costa Rica * Croatia * Cyprus * Czech Republic * Denmark * El Salvador * Estonia * Finland * France * Germany * Greece * Guatemala * Hungary * Ireland * Israel * Italy * Kosovo * Latvia * Lithuania * Luxembourg * Moldova * Netherlands * North Macedonia * Panama * Philippines * Poland * Portugal * Romania * Scotland * Serbia * Slovakia * Slovenia * South Korea * Spain * Sweden * Switzerland * United Kingdom * United States * Uruguay

Thank you for your time and work on behalf of our wonderful town.
Best,
Rachel

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Board of Trustees](#)
Subject: Regarding the adoption of the IHRA definition
Date: Tuesday, August 19, 2025 10:44:28 AM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

To the board of trustees,

I am writing with my opinion that Croton should not adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

Antisemitic speech and acts are abhorrent, as is all hate speech.

However, the definition in question equates hate speech with criticism of a government's leaders, actions, or policies. That infringes on free speech.

Thanks for your consideration.

Meredith Phillips

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Manager's Office](#); [Brian Pugh](#); [Board of Trustees](#); [Nora Nicholson](#); [Len Simon](#); [Maria Slippen](#); [Cara Politi](#)
Subject: Tonight's Village Board meeting
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 11:48:01 AM

*****CAUTION:** External sender.***

Hi Bryan,

I am submitting these remarks and wish them to be included, in their entirety, at the first public comment portion of the meeting. Unfortunately I am out of the state and cannot present them in person

Thank you in advance, Sherry

The IHRA definition of antisemitism includes eleven examples of antisemitism, seven of which claim that criticism of the state of Israel is antisemitic.

This is a politicized definition, and we've seen ample evidence that these examples are being weaponized to discredit and silence legitimate criticism of Israel's policies as antisemitism. This conflation has led to decisive and dangerous repression in our country.

Antisemitism that identifies me as a member of a specific group, attributes negative and demeaning characteristics to me on the basis of my inclusion in that group, and seeks to separate me, humiliate me and discriminate against me in speech or action has been around for centuries. Present laws to protect against discrimination, harassment, verbal abuse and violence based on hate already exist and must be diligently enforced.

Criticism of Israel, on the other hand, is protected speech, guaranteed under the First Amendment to the US Constitution as freedom of speech. That same Amendment guarantees the freedom to gather, to protest and to petition against our government's grievous policies. When I speak out against Israel's inhumane, brutal and horrifying actions against Palestinians, and when I advocate for a ceasefire and demand that Israel stop starving Gaza, I am not antisemitic, I am not a terrorist, I am not a self-hating Jew, I am not a person who hates my country. I recognize and abhor Israel's genocide of Palestinians: it is a moral issue.

The letter that the clergy members sent to Croton's Village Board states that "a shared formal definition of antisemitism is critical for our Village". If the members of the clergy who live, work and serve residents of the Croton community feel the need "to do something to combat the deeply ingrained hate that has seeped into our community", perhaps they can publicly advocate for protection of all "rhetoric, intimidation or attacks" not only for Jews but for all historically targeted and vulnerable populations, including Arabs, Muslims and Palestinians. None can be safe until all are safe is not just an empty slogan; it's a reality.

I would also encourage those same clergy members to use their voices to strongly advocate for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, an end to the genocide, and an immediate waterfall of humanitarian aid, including food, water, medical personnel and equipment and the resources to power those needed services, to the embattled Palestinian people. Let Gaza live!

Respectfully, Sherry Horowitz

Sent from my Galaxy