

Antisemitism guidance from Jewish Greens



Antisemitism is on the rise throughout British society, and around the world.

The Community Security Trust (CST) published its six-monthly report in August 2024, showing that nearly 2,000 instances of anti-Jewish hate were recorded across the UK in the first six months of 2024. This is the highest January-to-June total ever reported to CST, and higher than every previous annual total bar two: 2023 and 2021, when the record figures were also driven by anti-Jewish reactions to conflict in the Middle East. Not everyone agrees with CST's counting methods as it includes criticism of Israel, which can be legitimate depending on the circumstance (see below for explanation) and social media posts from other countries.

No-one is immune

The Green Party should not presume that it is immune from this. Antisemitic attitudes, actions and ideology are present throughout all spheres of society. We are an ideologically antiracist party, committed to eradicating antisemitism wherever we find it, including within our own party. Defining, identifying, understanding, and opposing antisemitism is a key part of our opposition to racism. As the Jewish poet Emma Lazarus wrote, foreshadowing Martin Luther King: *'until we are all free, we are none of us free'*.

Defining antisemitism

In essence, a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person, therefore applying this principle to Jews means that allegations of antisemitism should always be taken seriously and investigated sensitively.

There are multiple perceptions of antisemitism, and it takes many forms. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is one of the most recognised and generally used by British Jewish organisations and the UK government. There is also the Jerusalem Declaration, which was written as a direct response and has a high degree of support within academic Jewish and antisemitism studies. April Rosenblum, in 'The Past Didn't Go Anywhere: Making Resistance to Antisemitism a part of all our movements', views antisemitism as primarily institutional and structural, putting greater emphasis on the links between antisemitism and other forms of racism and discrimination.

Rosenblum describes anti-Jewish oppression as having shifted forms between religious, racial and political persecution. The basic beliefs are that Jews:

- Have abnormal or supernatural amounts of power,
- Are mysterious or act secretly behind the scenes,
- Are disproportionately the cause of harm in the world, are disloyal to, or seek the destruction of, the society in which they live,
- Are the "brains" behind the action, and
- Are wealthy or greedy.

Antisemitism and the state of Israel

The IHRA definition of antisemitism provides guidance with regard to the state of Israel. In reference to the example: *'Denying the Jewish people their right to self determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.'* Possible contexts where this could be antisemitic include:

- Attempting to conceptually deny Jewish self-determination (or in less academic terms arguing that Jews shouldn't have political rights or freedom of religion) is clearly antisemitic. However, it would not be antisemitic to criticise particular strategies for ensuring those rights, for example ethno-nationalism. An argument that as 'Israel is a racist endeavour', Jews don't deserve civil rights would be antisemitic.
- It is likely to be antisemitic to claim that Israel bears an outsized responsibility for racism outside of Israel, disproportionate to any reasonable assessment of Israeli political power. This would be applying the antisemitic idea that Jews have disproportionate power to Israel.
- It likely to be antisemitic to argue that Israel is a racist endeavour because Jews are intrinsically more racist than white Christians.

What is not antisemitism when referring to the state of Israel

- Arguments that racism is foundational to modern statehood, and that Israel is an example of this, would not be antisemitic.
- It is also not antisemitic to argue that racism has played a significant role in Israeli life and politics since its founding, as long as similar patterns in other countries eg Britain, the US, Australia are also identified. As the IHRA definition confirms 'criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic'.
- It is important to see contemporary antisemitism in relation to anti-Israel discourse. This occurs, either by targeting Israel itself as a proxy for Jews or by repeating old antisemitic slanders with 'Israel' or 'Zionist' swapped for the word 'Jew'.

Some of the main examples of antisemitism in the Jerusalem Declaration include:

- Denying or minimising the Holocaust by claiming that the deliberate Nazi genocide of the Jews did not take place, or that there were no extermination camps or gas chambers, or that the number of victims was a fraction of the actual total.
- Requiring people, because they are Jewish, to condemn Israel or Zionism publicly (for example, at a political meeting).
- Denying the rights of Jews in the State of Israel to exist and flourish, collectively and individually, in accordance with the principle of equality.

The Jerusalem Declaration defines the following as not being antisemitic:

- Criticising or opposing Zionism as a form of nationalism, or arguing for a variety of constitutional arrangements for Israelis and Palestinians in the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. It is not antisemitic to support arrangements that accord full equality to all inhabitants "between the river and the sea", whether in two states, a binational state, unitary democratic state, federal state, or in whatever form.