

Submission to the Australian Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion By: The International Legal Forum (ILF)

Strengthening Australia's Response to Contemporary Antisemitism

*"Antisemitism begins with Jews, but it never ends with them. A world without room for Jews is one that has no room for difference, and a world that lacks space for difference lacks space for humanity itself."*¹

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

1. Executive Summary

Antisemitism, the world's oldest hatred, is an ever-mutating virus that sounds sirens to a major threat to societies and the places and spaces it plagues. While "traditional" manifestations of this lethal hate persist, contemporary strains appear and spread in coded, contextual, and institutional forms, including through online platforms, public discourse, and the selective application of hijacked, redefined, inverted, weaponized legal and human rights principles.

Recent events in Australia, including the Bondi Beach massacre that targeted Jews celebrating Chanukah, and the surrounding public discourse that normalizes antisemitism and compromises communal safety, underscore the urgency of strengthening Australia's frameworks for comprehensively identifying, addressing, and preventing antisemitic threats. These events highlight the broader reality in which antisemitism is not only a matter of hate speech, harassment, and intimidation, but also intersects with real-world violence, personal and professional harm, and community-wide insecurity.

¹ Sacks, Jonathan, A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture, London 2009, p. 111.

Antisemitism today is expressed through:

- Coded references to Jews, frequently via the term “Zionist” used as a proxy for Jewish identity
- Delegitimization or exceptional scrutiny of Jewish collective identity and self-determination
- Inconsistent application of universal human rights standards in ways that disproportionately single out Jewish individuals and/or the Jewish State of Israel.

Australia’s existing and proposed frameworks for identifying and addressing antisemitism are valuable, particularly the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism in 2021. However, without IHRA’s consistent application (i.e. application across institutions, organizations, in educational materials, and beyond) and emboldened by impunity, gaps remain and grow. Furthermore, the scourge of antisemitism continues to spread due to a lack of enforcement guidance, digital platform accountability, and institutional coordination.

This submission offers targeted recommendations to strengthen Australia’s ability to identify, address, and prevent displays of all forms of this virulent hate, including contemporary antisemitism, while reinforcing social cohesion and public trust.

2. About the International Legal Forum

The International Legal Forum is a non-governmental organization dedicated to remembering, reclaiming, and renewing the foundational principles of law vital to confronting rising extremism, and the antisemitism that signals it. Led by our CEO Michal Cotler-Wunsh, we are committed to the equal and consistent application of law, in its original intent. In addition to our submission, Michal, as Israel’s former Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism and a former legislator, is available to engage with and provide additional support to the Commission’s important work.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Antisemitism is increasingly expressed in indirect and coded forms

Having mutated by latching onto the guiding social construct of human rights, contemporary antisemitism uses hijacked terminology to peddle modern day blood libels. Though language, framing, and narratives may have changed, the mechanism of systematic demonization, delegitimization, and double standards produces the same discriminatory effects.

In particular, after decades of its systematic manipulation including equating it with racism, the use of “Zionist” as a proxy for Jewish identity in hostile contexts functions as a coded substitute for “modern” and “acceptable” antisemitic expression, particularly when accompanied by stereotypes, collective blame, and/or exclusionary behaviour.

It is important to note that around the world, whether in Australia, the US, Canada, and beyond, for the vast majority of Jewish people believe Israel is integral to their identity,² carrying the memory of their ancestors who for thousands of years prayed, yearned, and longed to return as a people to Zion and Jerusalem. Zionism, a progressive national liberation movement in fact enabled the Jewish people’s right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland of Israel, anchored in the indisputable connection between the Jewish people, a prototypical indigenous people, and the land of Israel. As such, there are many non-Jews who too identify as Zionists, as they also support the Jewish people’s right to self-determination in the Jewish nation state.

The utilization of the term “Zionist” or any variation of it (ie. “Zios”) therefore targets anyone who believes in Israel’s right to exist, in any borders, including the majority of Australia’s Jewish population and significant numbers of non-Jews and must be recognized as a form of “modern” antisemitism. Failing to recognize Zionist as a proxy creates blind spots and enforcement challenges for institutions, educators, law enforcement, and digital platforms, which lack clear guidance on identification and response.

² <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/zionism-anti-zionism-doxxing-and-whatsapp-zio600-group/103472344>;
<https://cjs.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cjs/article/view/40487/36736> ; <https://www.ajc.org/news/anti-zionist-jews>

Examples

A. In Summer 2022, the Government of Canada found itself embroiled in a scandal related to providing an anti-racism grant to an organization led by Laith Marouf, an individual with a history of promoting racist, hateful, and antisemitic content online. In his posts on X, Marouf would refer to Jews as “Zionists” or “Jewish White Supremacists.” For example, one tweet said: “You know all those loud mouthed bags of human feces, aka the Jewish White Supremacists; when we liberate Palestine and they have to go back to where they come from, they will return to being low voiced bitches of [their] Christian/Secular White Supremacist Masters.” In another tweet he wrote, “I have a motto: Life is too short for shoes with laces, or for entertaining Jewish White Supremacists with anything but a bullet to the head.” Marouf defended his tweets, with his lawyer stating that Marouf does not harbour “any animus toward the Jewish faith as a collective group” and that the reference “clearly distinguished” between “Jewish white supremacists” and Jews or Jewish people in general.

In response, all political parties in Canada called for accountability and transparency into the ordeal, the Government of Canada halted the funding to Marouf’s organization, and the department responsible for the funding added a new attestation to all grants that requires grantees to adhere to Canada’s anti-racism policy, which includes the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

This example both demonstrates the manipulation of language to promote hatred against the Jewish community as well as the importance of application of the IHRA definition within governing frameworks.



Examples of Tweets by Laith Marouf

B. A member of Toronto's Jewish community submitted a complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario regarding Foodbenders', a Toronto eatery, and its owner Kimberly Hawkins' promotion of antisemitism. Hawkins has said on Instagram and elsewhere that "Zionists are Nazis" and are not welcome at her restaurant, while also tying it to alleged Jewish and Zionist influence within the Canadian government and in US foreign policy. The complaint argues that denying Zionists entry to her restaurant violates discrimination laws in Canada.

C. On March 4, 2024, Weathered Waves Bar in Salt Lake City, Utah, posted the statement, "No Zionists Allowed." Followed by, "We are pleased to announce we are banning all Zionists ever from our establishments." Jewish representatives in Salt Lake City, including rabbis, expressed their grave concerns related to the statement. Particularly, that the establishment was barring Jews from entering their establishment.

D. On October 5, 2024, anti-Israel protesters chanted, "Say it loud, say it clear, Zionists not welcome here." The public declaration that "Zionists are not welcome" in England resulted in increased concerns for London's Jewish community members, particularly given a majority of London's Jewish community identifies as Zionists and argue that Zionism is central to their Jewish Identities.

E. On March 15, 2026, a 14-year-old Jewish girl, Esther ("Esti"), disappeared in Toronto, Ontario. As police, family members, and volunteers worked urgently to locate her, missing-person posters were distributed throughout the city seeking public assistance. According to media reports, including the Toronto Sun, some of these posters were repeatedly torn down. The removal of notices intended to help locate a vulnerable child is disturbing under any circumstances. However, the incident is particularly illustrative of a broader antisemitism problem because Esther was not a political figure, activist, or representative of any state; she was a Jewish child in need of help. The apparent targeting of efforts to find her demonstrates how hostility toward Jews can transcend political discourse and affect ordinary Jewish individuals wholly unrelated to any geopolitical conflict. In a climate where anti-Zionist rhetoric is increasingly used to justify exclusionary or discriminatory conduct toward Jews, the distinction between opposition to Israel and hostility toward Jewish people can become blurred, resulting in Jewish individuals—including children—being treated as symbols of a broader political grievance rather than as individuals deserving of equal concern and protection.

3.2 Digital platforms amplify and accelerate contemporary antisemitism

Online environments have become the primary vector for the dissemination of antisemitic content. This includes:

- Rapid amplification of conspiratorial narratives
- Normalisation of antisemitic tropes in meme-based or coded formats
- Evasion of content moderation through substitution language.

Enforcement gaps between intent, language, and platform policy definitions enable harmful content to persist and spread. Lack of transparency—of algorithms and of enforcement policies remains a global challenge, with growing recognition that what happens online does not remain there, and results in real-world harm.³

Examples

A. On May 20, 2026, The Jerusalem Post published an article "[Spotify declines to take down rap song cited for antisemitic conspiracy claims.](#)" As detailed in the article, the song has garnered almost three million collective plays since being uploaded to Spotify, YouTube, and Apple Music on March 4, 2026, and contains multiple antisemitic tropes and calls for violence, including lyrics stating "It's time to load this chamber, And aim at the head of the monster now." Despite the fact that Spotify's policies prohibit content that promotes hate, incites violence, or targets individuals or groups based on protected characteristics, including religion and ethnicity, the company has to date refused to remove the song. This is not just dangerous for the Jewish community, but for all. Online antisemitism is not just harmless chatter relegated to dark corners of the internet – it spills onto campuses and into the streets, causing rising real-world harm. The selective application of any rules in any spaces renders them useless and negates their ability to protect anyone.

B. A 2023 report "[Seasons of Hate: The Compelling link between Online Hate and Real-World Antisemitism in Canada](#)" published by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) in Canada and the Network Research Contagion Institute (NCRI) analyzed more than 100 million social media posts and identified a disturbing relationship between online antisemitic remarks and real-world antisemitic

³ See: <https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/The-Polarization-Pendulum.pdf>

incidents in 2021, which persisted even after a reduction in social media activity. This growing wave of online and offline hate reflects an unsettling trend toward the normalization of antisemitism in Canadian society. The findings of this report document the relationship between online and offline antisemitism, an understanding of which is crucial for both policymakers and law enforcement to protect the Jewish community. This report is particularly relevant, as it shows that an overseas conflict can and does have dangerous implications for Canada's Jewish community.

C. Another 2023 report "Mememes, Missiles, and Mobilizations: An Analysis of the 2021 Israel/Hamas Conflict" published by Boundless and NCRI focused on the United States and undertook the largest quantitative analysis to date on the Operation: Guardian of the Walls incident in May of 2021. The report found that:

- Warfare during the May 2021 Gaza-Israel conflict sparked the largest increase of online mentions of social justice terms like "apartheid", "colonialism" and "settler" in the history of social media.
- Warfare during the Gaza-Israel conflict sparked the largest increases in anti-Israel protests and antisemitic incidences in recent history in the United States.
- Terms pertaining to social justice, anti-Israel protests, and antisemitic incidents overlapped together and persisted together beyond the lifetime of either the military conflict or neutral conflict language around "Israel or Palestine."
- Social justice terms serve as "weaponized conflict language" which create an overwhelming volume of racialized, demonizing, and unprecedented double standards against Israel.
- The scale and intensity of this phenomena suggest this activity is antisemitic, clearly matching the criteria set out in IHRA definition of antisemitism.
- Weaponized conflict language activity fosters "virtue targeting" – the spatial distribution of tweets containing the word "apartheid" and the spatial distribution of protests both indicate where antisemitic incidents are likely to take place in the real world.

D. The phenomenon commonly described by Jewish communities as a "moral inversion" of antisemitism—where Jews are recast as oppressors and those advocating or committing violence against Jews are portrayed as resistance actors—has increasingly been examined by researchers studying online radicalization. NCRI's report Moral Inversion and the Rise of Authoritarian Sympathy provides a contemporary case study of this dynamic and helps explain how antisemitic narratives can gain legitimacy within broader social justice and activist ecosystems.

3.3 Lack of institutional coordination & inconsistent application of standards

Responsibility for identifying and addressing antisemitism is distributed across multiple systems, including law enforcement, educational institutions, regulators, and digital platforms. In the absence of consistent definitional and operational frameworks, responses vary significantly across institutions. While some governments, police forces, and universities have adopted the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism as a guiding framework, others have rejected or declined to implement it, leading to inconsistent standards for identifying and responding to antisemitic conduct.

This fragmentation creates moral and operational ambiguity, allowing³ antisemitic rhetoric and conduct to spread across online platforms, campuses, and public institutions without consistent identification, accountability, or response. Experts and policymakers have increasingly warned that without shared standards, institutions struggle to distinguish between legitimate political discourse and discriminatory conduct targeting Jews as individuals or as a collective.

Examples

A. Following the October 7 Hamas massacre and corresponding wave of antisemitism on campuses across North America, universities across North America responded differently to similar allegations of antisemitic harassment and intimidation, reflecting the absence of a shared operational framework for identifying antisemitism. Conduct that was investigated or condemned at some institutions was treated as protected political expression at others, creating significant uncertainty around institutional standards and enforcement. A 2024 Jewish Telegraphic Agency article described the Title VI enforcement landscape as “the ‘Wild West’ for Jews on campus,” noting that “schools and complainants alike have said they are confused.” This inconsistency has contributed to confusion among students, administrators, and regulators alike regarding when anti-Israel activity crosses the line into antisemitic conduct.

3 See: <https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/The-Polarization-Pendulum.pdf>

B. As detailed above, the 2022 Laith Marouf scandal in Canada demonstrated how inconsistent institutional understanding and implementation of antisemitism frameworks can produce serious operational failures. Notably, the Canadian Heritage Department provided a grant to Laith Marouf's organization despite the fact that the Government of Canada had already adopted the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism in 2019 as part of its Anti-Racism Strategy. In response to the controversy, Canadian Heritage introduced additional safeguards, including requiring grant recipients to attest that they will adhere to Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, which incorporates the IHRA definition. The case illustrated that adopting a framework alone is insufficient absent consistent operationalization, institutional literacy, and implementation mechanisms across government systems.

C. Major social media platforms have faced repeated criticism for inconsistent moderation of antisemitic content, particularly following the October 7 Hamas massacre. An ADL study examining how platforms handled reports of antisemitic conspiracy theories and antisemitic use of the term "Zionist" found that "a majority of platforms (3 out of 5 in each category) took no action" when hateful content was reported by ordinary users, despite the platforms' own policies prohibiting such conduct. The report further concluded that platforms "only took meaningful action when ADL escalated flagged content through direct channels," demonstrating significant inconsistencies between stated policies and operational enforcement. This lack of consistent implementation has contributed to the persistence and normalization of antisemitic rhetoric online.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The adoption and application of the IHRA Working Definition across bodies and institutions.

Having adopted IHRA at the Federal level, Australia should ensure the application of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism across:

- Federal and state government agencies
- Law enforcement bodies
- Education providers
- Publicly funded institutions

This must include training and practical implementation guidance to support consistent interpretation, particularly in relation to contemporary and coded forms of antisemitism. An important guiding document is the Government of Canada's "[Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism](#)" and Australia's "[Understanding Antisemitism in Australia](#)."

4.2 National training framework on contemporary antisemitism

Develop and implement a national training framework, anchored in the IHRA Working Definition, for:

- Law enforcement agencies
- Public sector employees
- Education sector staff

Training should include:

- "Modern" and coded forms of antisemitism
- Identification of online-to-offline escalation patterns

4.3 Clear guidance for identifying coded antisemitic expression

Government and relevant regulators should develop guidance to assist institutions in identifying antisemitism where it is expressed indirectly, including:

- Substitution language (e.g., “Zionist” used as a proxy for Jews in hostile contexts and for the systematic demonization, delegitimization, and application of double standards to the single Jewish nation state and anyone who supports its right to exist)
- Collective attribution of blame to Jewish individuals or communities
- Exclusionary practices targeting individuals based on Jewish identity

4.4 Strengthening digital platform accountability

Australia should work with digital platforms to ensure:

- Consistent enforcement of existing hate speech policies relating to antisemitism
- Recognition of coded forms of antisemitic expression
- Improved transparency in moderation standards and enforcement outcomes
- Mechanisms to address rapid amplification of harmful content

4.5 Improved inter-agency coordination and reporting

Establish a coordinated national mechanism to:

- Collect and publish data on antisemitic incidents of all forms
- Harmonise definitions and reporting standards across jurisdictions
- Improve early identification of emerging trends
- Support evidence-based policy responses

4.6 Public education and awareness initiatives

Support public education initiatives to:

- Increase awareness of contemporary antisemitism
- Strengthen understanding of how antisemitism manifests in modern digital and institutional contexts
- Reinforce social cohesion and mutual respect in multicultural Australia

5. Conclusion

Antisemitism in Australia today is not confined to traditional expressions of prejudice, but increasingly manifests through indirect, coded, and digitally amplified forms across places and spaces. Recent events, including the Bondi Beach massacre and associated public discourse on antisemitism and community safety, underscore the imperative for clear, consistent frameworks for identifying and responding to antisemitic threats across both online and offline environments.

Strengthening Australia's response to antisemitism is essential not only for the safety and dignity of Jewish Australians, but for the integrity of broader democratic society. An ancient pernicious hate, antisemitism sounds sirens to rising extremism that threatens humanity and freedom.

This submission recommends practical, implementable measures that will enhance clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in addressing antisemitism in all its contemporary forms, centred around the importance of the implementation of the IHRA Working Definition knowing that you cannot identify what you do not define, and cannot combat what you cannot identify.

Additional Resources:

- [Inter-Parliamentary Task Force for Combating Online Antisemitism Interim Report](#)
- ["Combating Antisemitism with Human Rights and International Law,"](#) by Michal Cotler-Wunsh for the Academic Engagement Network.
- ["Again and Again: The Mutation of Antisemitism and the Fight for 'Never Again' : How law, human rights, and digital culture are being weaponized against Jews and Zionism,"](#) by Michal Cotler-Wunsh for the German Police University (attached)
- [Michal Cotler-Wunsh speech before the United Nations](#)
- ["A Never Again Moment – again,"](#) by Michal Cotler-Wunsh in Politico
- ["Anti-Zionism is Antisemitism"](#) – Michal Cotler-Wunsh on the Sam Harris Podcast
- ["Honoring Yom HaShoah: In the Shadow of October 7,"](#) by Michal Cotler-Wunsh published in *Justice: The Legal Magazine of International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists* (attached)