

EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

A Guide for
Healthcare
Workers

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| <hr/> | |
| Your rights and responsibilities | 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| • The Law | 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| • Professional rights and responsibilities | 6 |
| <hr/> | |
| (a) Employers | 6 |
| <hr/> | |
| Tier 2 visa holders | 6 |
| <hr/> | |
| Bank holders | 7 |
| <hr/> | |
| (b) Regulatory bodies | 7 |
| <hr/> | |
| (c) Educational institutions/training bodies | 8 |
| <hr/> | |
| Writing reflective pieces | 9 |
| <hr/> | |
| Social media | 10 |
| <hr/> | |
| Doxxing | 12 |
| <hr/> | |

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Methods of workplace repression; how to challenge them | 13 |
| • Political neutrality | 13 |
| • Antisemitism | 16 |
| Usings terms | 18 |
| • Genocide | 18 |
| • Holocaust | 19 |
| Facing workplace challenges | 20 |
| Sources of support | 24 |
| Appendices | 26 |
| • Reflection Template | 26 |
| • IHRA definition | 27 |

Introduction

Healthcare workers (HCWs) across the NHS are increasingly being instructed to remove badges, symbols or social media posts in support of the Palestinian people, with management citing patient complaints, hospital dress codes, and professional regulatory guidance. Staff have also faced disciplinary action of varying degrees of severity for expressing solidarity with Palestinians, in the workplace and on social media. This reflects a broader, coordinated campaign by pro-Zionist organisations to suppress any expression of solidarity across health, education and the civil service.

As a result, HCWs have experienced discrimination, restrictions on freedom of speech, bullying, anti-Palestinian racism, harassment and suspensions by management. The cumulative effect is significant emotional, psychological and financial distress, moral injury, and a climate of fear in the workplace. A survey by the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) of its membership in March 2024 showed that 93% of over 650 HCWs surveyed felt silenced, restricted or censored in being able to call for the preservation of civilian lives, or call for a ceasefire in Gaza. While Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) HCWs have been disproportionately targeted (a well-established pattern acknowledged at an institutional level), colleagues from all backgrounds, united by a shared commitment to justice and the protection of life, have faced repercussions.

The systematic destruction of the Palestinian healthcare system is well documented in this interactive timeline from Mediciens Sans Frontiers. It does not even include Israel's breaches of the ceasefire (killing 90+ Gazans), the subsequent total siege, aid embargo and the ongoing killing and abduction of HCWs, all of which constitute violations of international humanitarian law. A report prepared by HCWs from across the world for UN special rapporteurs Francesca Albanese and Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng entitled "A medical perspective on Israel's genocide enablement apparatus in Gaza and abroad", states that **repression of, and reprisals against HCWs in western institutions is part of genocide enablement**, and "normalises the targeting of healthcare workers and facilities, setting a dangerous global precedent".

This guide is intended to inform and support HCWs in safely and confidently expressing their views in the workplace. It outlines:

Section I: Your rights and responsibilities, under the law and professional frameworks

Section II: Mechanisms of workplace suppression, with the counterarguments

Section III: Practical guidance for responding to workplace challenges

Section I

The Law

Your Legal Rights to Freedom of Expression at Work

** **Disclaimer:** Please note this section is a general statement on the law in this area, after advice from employment and human rights lawyers. It does not constitute legal advice for individuals.*

If your employment or career is under threat, or you are being intimidated or harassed, you should seek advice from a lawyer, on the specifics of your individual case.

The Equality Act 2010 ("EqA 2010") protects people from discrimination based on certain "protected characteristics" such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, amongst other personal characteristics. The Employment Tribunal case of Professor David Miller v University of Bristol established the legal right to hold anti-Zionist beliefs as a protected characteristic.

The European Convention on Human Rights ("the ECHR") sets out our rights in relation to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9), freedom of expression (Article 10), and the right to protest (Article 11). They are incorporated into UK law in the Human Rights Act 1998. These rights are not absolute, but must be taken into account when considering employment matters.

The EqA 2010 is primary legislation with which all individuals and organisations, including the NHS, must comply. The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to.

Could wearing a badge showing support for Palestine amount to harassment of Israeli or Jewish patients in the eyes of the law?

UK Lawyers for Israel ("UKLFI") have suggested that employers allowing staff to wear Palestine badges are in breach of the Equality Act 2010 on the basis that the wearing of badges amounts to harassment of Jewish or Israeli patients by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment.

What amounts to harassment is fact specific and this specific issue has not, as far as we are aware, been considered by a Tribunal or a Court. However, it seems very unlikely that wearing a badge depicting a Palestinian flag or other Palestinian solidarity symbol would meet the threshold of harassment under section 26 of the EqA 2010.

The most important marker is the standard of care and treatment provided to patients, irrespective of their characteristics. Providing the NHS worker's standard of care and treatment is the same regardless of patients' beliefs, ethnicity or religion, a Palestinian solidarity symbol is very unlikely to amount to harassment.

We would urge health workers to seek support and legal advice based on their individual circumstances, due to the fact-specific nature of these issues. No two cases are the same.

Section I

Your professional rights and obligations

As well as the law, HCWs are governed by several overlapping frameworks:

- a) Employers
- b) Professional regulatory bodies
- c) Educational institutions / Training bodies

Understanding how these interact is key to mitigating risk and asserting your rights when expressing solidarity with Palestine. a) Applies to all HCWs; b) and c) will apply to professional staff.

a) Your Employer

Your employer may be an NHS organisation (such as an NHS trust or local health board), a primary care provider (such as a general practice surgery), a private employment agency (such as a locum agency), an independent healthcare provider (such as certain therapy services), or another independent provider (such as cleaning or housekeeping services). Each of these employers will have their own contracts and policies with their employees.

For example, an employing NHS Trust will have its own internal policies, including a dress code and the use of social media. These policies vary across trusts, but are generally aligned with [The NHS Uniform and Workwear: Guidance for Employers in England](#). This also does not forbid wearing of badges or symbols - it states that they are permitted, provided they do not compromise safety or communication.

[The NHS constitution](#) affirms that all staff have the right to be treated fairly, equally, and free from discrimination. It contains no provisions banning expression of personal or political beliefs, such as badges or solidarity messages. The Handbook to the NHS Constitution also says that all NHS employers are bound by legislation on unlawful discrimination, i.e. the Equality Act 2010, and the "[People Promise](#)" pledges that we should all be "compassionate and inclusive(and) we each have a voice that counts".

NHS workers have long worn symbols supporting a variety of causes, including LGBT rights, climate action, industrial action etc. Political symbols, such as those in support of Ukraine have also been displayed, and some [NHS Trusts](#) have actively supported such expressions.

A note on Tier 2 visa holders

A Tier 2 visa holder (now officially called a Skilled Worker visa holder) is someone who has been sponsored by a UK employer, usually an NHS Trust, to live and work in the UK. This means:

- The visa, and right to remain in the UK are linked to their employment.
- If they are dismissed, or if their employment contract is terminated, they may lose their right to stay in the UK unless they can find a new sponsor within a specific, narrow timeframe.
- This creates a situation of additional vulnerability in the workplace, because disciplinary actions, even if minor, can have immigration consequences, including the risk of deportation.

Your professional rights and obligations

In summary, tier 2 visa holders have the same legal protections as other workers in terms of discrimination, harassment and employment law; however the consequences of suspension or termination of employment contract for this subset of HCWs is more severe as their certificate of sponsorship, and therefore right to live in the UK, is linked to their employment contract.

A note on Bank Workers

Bank workers are casual workers, or zero-hours staff who do not hold permanent contracts. There are over 150,000 bank workers across the NHS in England, spanning doctors across various specialities, nurses, midwives, allied healthcare professionals, and technical, maintenance and operational staff. This significant portion of the NHS workforce is particularly vulnerable to discrimination.

While bank staff are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, and rights to freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act 1998, they may not have the same contractual security and procedural protections as permanent employees.

Bank workers may be removed from shifts or excluded from work without the safeguards that apply to permanent staff. Their status also leaves them vulnerable to informal or opaque forms of workplace reprisal. In some cases, expressions of solidarity with Palestinians, for example, through social media posts or visible symbols, have led to exclusion from shifts or removal from staffing lists without clear reasons or formal hearings.

While such actions may still be unlawful if they constitute discrimination or victimisation, casual status can make it more difficult to assert rights or challenge decisions swiftly. Awareness of this added risk is important for bank workers engaging in political expression at work or online.

b) Professional Regulatory Bodies

Regulatory bodies such as the General Medical Council (GMC), General Dental Council (GDC), Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), General Pharmaceutical Council, General Optical Council set standards of professional behaviour and maintain professional registers. They are responsible for ensuring fitness to practise, in order to protect patients and uphold public trust.

The GMC sets standards of professional behaviour in Good Medical Practice. In terms of dress and appearance, it requires HCWs to be clean, safe, and maintain effective communication. It does not ban badges or political symbols, but states that "You must not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious and moral beliefs) to patients in ways that exploit their vulnerability or could reasonably cause them distress."

The GDC has the same statement. The NMC does not have any specific guidance on wearing badges or symbols. The HCPC states that "Your personal values, biases and beliefs must not detrimentally impact the care, treatment or other services that you provide."

The Scottish government has a national uniform and dress code for HCWs which has similar provisions, and has a general statement which states: "Staff must dress in a manner which is sensitive to the social, cultural and diversity and equality needs of other staff, patients and carers/visitors."

Your professional rights and obligations

These bodies emphasise that personal views must not interfere with the delivery of fair, respectful, and non-discriminatory care. None of these regulatory frameworks prevent you from wearing a badge or expressing political views.

c) Educational Institutions and Training Bodies

A student or trainee in a healthcare profession will be accountable not only to their employer or professional regulator, but also to their university, training body or postgraduate deanery. Each of these institutions will have its own policies, and an allegation or complaint against a student, that is upheld by the institution, can trigger disciplinary mechanisms.

In addition to the standard non-academic codes of conduct for all students, undergraduate students in healthcare disciplines, have subject-specific codes of conduct that reflect those of the relevant professional regulator (e.g., GMC, NMC, HCPC). Students may be subject to fitness to practise (FTP) procedures within their university, which assess their suitability to enter the profession. Breaches of university codes, including allegations related to social media use, protest participation, or wearing political symbols, can lead to investigation, suspension, or expulsion.

The Medical Schools Council (MSC) states that medical students must "demonstrate high standards of behaviour" at all times, including outside of clinical settings, and may be referred to fitness to practise committees if concerns are raised. The NMC and HCPC similarly expect student nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals to uphold the values of their respective codes from the outset of training (NMC Code, 2018) (HCPC Guidance for Students).

For postgraduate doctors, additional oversight is provided by postgraduate training bodies and deaneries. Doctors in training hold a National Training Number (NTN) and are subject to the Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP) process. Concerns about professionalism, conduct, or complaints, even outside clinical work, may be escalated and will need to be declared to the ARCP panel. This can potentially result in extra supervision, delays in progression, or even release from training. Such decisions can have significant career consequences.

Trainees in fields such as nursing associates, clinical psychologists, paramedics, and physician associates, are also subject to regular performance reviews and FTP evaluations. Complaints made by placement providers or employers can be reported back to training leads, and may jeopardise progression or qualification.

It is therefore essentially that students and trainees:

- Understand their institution's conduct and disciplinary procedures
- Maintain professional boundaries on social media and in public settings, while asserting their legal rights
- Seek early advice if contacted by university staff, placement supervisors, or postgraduate training leads in relation to political expression.

While students and trainees retain their legal protections, including freedom of expression and protection from discrimination, they are vulnerable to institutional suppression. CAGE international have produced a useful guide "Disciplinary Investigations at University", and should be contacted early if a student is subject to investigation.

Your professional rights and obligations

A note on writing reflective pieces

If you are subject to a complaint, informal meeting, formal disciplinary process, or investigation, you may be asked, or feel expected to reflect on the situation as part of your portfolio, appraisal, or ARCP process.

Reflection is a powerful tool for professional growth, but consider that these documents may be used to inform an employer or educator's investigation. Reflecting does not mean apologising for expressing a legal, protected belief — especially when that belief relates to anti-racism, humanitarian values, or upholding the right to life. In these situations reflections serve to contextualise incidents, show that you have considered all points of view, acknowledged the perspective and sentiments of others, while not denouncing or distancing yourself from your values.

When writing a reflective piece:

1. Be factual and empathetic. Without incriminating yourself, acknowledge how the incident may have affected others.
2. Describe the impact on yourself - especially if it caused distress, isolation, or moral injury
3. Stay within the bounds of confidentiality and professionalism
4. Frame your reflection as part of your professional values
5. Always ask your union rep, professional defence body (e.g., MDU, MPS, MDDUS) or legal advisor to review before submission

An example template is provided in the appendix.

Section I

Social Media and Online Expression

Social media is a powerful tool for expressing solidarity, educating others, and advocating for justice.

However, a significant portion of workplace repression directed at HCWs who express support for Palestine has centred on their online activity. Posts and shares have been used as grounds for informal warnings, complaints or formal disciplinary proceedings. In some cases, individuals have been 'followed' with the sole purpose to gather evidence against them, which has informed reports that have been submitted to their employers.

HCWs are expected to uphold professional standards online as well as offline. Regulatory bodies and NHS employers have clear expectations around confidentiality, professionalism, and conduct on social media.

Regulatory Guidance

The GMC's guidance [Use of Social Media \(2024\)](#) outline several key principles:

- You must identify yourself clearly as a doctor **if** you post in a professional capacity.
- You must treat colleagues and patients with respect, and avoid content that could undermine public confidence in the profession.
- You must avoid discriminatory or abusive language and not bring the profession into disrepute.

GMC guidance explicitly acknowledges that doctors have a right to express personal views, including political views, as long as they do so responsibly and without breaching professional standards.

Other regulators such as the **NMC, HCPC, and GDC adopt similar positions: social media use must be professional, protect patient confidentiality, and uphold public trust.** Expression of personal views is legitimate, but it must not amount to harassment, bullying, or discrimination.

NHS and Employer Guidance

The [NHS England Social Media Guidance for Staff \(2025\)](#) encourages responsible use of social media and recognises it as a legitimate space in which staff can engage with others, campaign, and advocate.

Key points to consider include:

- Do not post anything that might be seen as bullying, discriminatory or offensive, especially in relation to **protected characteristics**.
- Avoid making comments that could be interpreted as speaking on behalf of your Trust or the NHS unless explicitly authorised.
- You may express personal views, including political solidarity, in a non-discriminatory manner.
- You may advocate for human rights, public health causes, critique NHS or government policies.

Social Media and Online Expression

Check your local Trust's social media policy, which may outline additional rules or reporting mechanisms. Some NHS Trusts require staff to include a disclaimer such as "the views expressed are my own" in bios.

Regardless of how NHS or employer guidance is interpreted, HCWs retain a number of legal rights under UK and international human rights law. These rights are not absolute and must be weighed against other considerations (e.g. public safety or institutional policy), but they remain fundamental protections. **You are strongly encouraged to seek legal advice if your online expression becomes the subject of disciplinary scrutiny.** Key protections under the European Convention on Human Rights (as incorporated into UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998) include:

1. Article 6: Right to a fair trial
2. Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence
3. Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
4. Article 10: Freedom of expression
5. Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination

Most advocates of Palestinians face allegations in relation to social media use, which is weaponised to silence HCWs. The themes for complaint are normally around "bringing the Trust / profession into disrepute" or "antisemitism". The general advice is to:

1. Maintain professional standards at all times.
2. Engage meaningfully with others (understand that certain accounts are designed to provoke).
3. Use professional language and speak against ideologies, not people, which can be misinterpreted (e.g. Israel, Zionism, not Israelis / Zionists).
4. Do not identify yourself with your employer, but rather with your profession.

Section I

Doxxing

Doxxing, the act of publicly revealing private information or identifying information about an individual without their consent, and with malicious intent, is increasingly being used as a tactic by groups or individuals, to intimidate, silence or persecute those who express solidarity with Palestinians.

Certain individuals and groups have targeted HCWs by publishing their names, photographs and workplaces, exposing them to harassment, reputational damage or physical threats. This can understandably be frightening.

Publishing private or sensitive information without consent is potentially illegal under the Data Protection Act 2018 and a GDPR breach.

Publishing this information with the intent to harass, intimidate or threaten is illegal under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Malicious Communications Act 1988.

Equality Labs' have produced an Anti-Doxxing Guide for Activists, which is a **comprehensive resource designed to help activists safeguard their digital identities against targeted harassment and doxing attacks**. It offers proactive strategies for digital hygiene and risk awareness.

If you are doxxed:

1. Document everything immediately.

Take screenshots and save links, dates, and usernames of all posts, emails, or websites involved.

2. Secure your online presence.

Tighten privacy settings, consider locking or deactivating accounts temporarily, and remove identifying information where possible.

3. Inform your employer.

Notify your manager or HR, explaining that you are being targeted for protected political expression, and request safeguarding measures.

4. Seek legal advice and union support.

Contact your union or professional body for advice. Doxxing may breach harassment or data protection laws, so legal action may be possible.

5. Contact the police if you feel unsafe.

If the doxxing is accompanied by threats, harassment, or serious fear for your safety, report it. Provide full documentation to support your report.

6. Consider using a subscription-based privacy service.

As outlined in the the Equality Labs' document mentioned above, certain services such as Deleteme or Privacy Pros scan the internet regularly for your personal data, as well as automatically submit opt-out requests to data broker sites.

Section II

Methods of workplace repression against Palestinian solidarity

The main arguments brought against HCWs are through:

1. Imposing ideas of 'political neutrality' or an 'apolitical NHS'
2. Labelling both criticism of Israel and solidarity with Palestine as antisemitic
3. Professional / Employer reputation - this is often vague, case-specific and related to one of the above.

However, it is vital that if subject to an investigation, the HCW first clarify the nature of the complaint exactly and comprehensively, before making any assumptions, or beginning to defend their position.

a) "POLITICAL NEUTRALITY" in the workplace

In March 2025, Barts Health NHS Trust amended its dress code policy following pressure from UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI), banning staff from wearing or displaying political symbols, to remain "completely apolitical and non-biased in our care." The Trust stated that some symbols may cause "worry and fear" and "offence" among patients or colleagues, and that the policy aims to foster an "inclusive environment".

This framing is problematic on a number of fronts:

1. Patients are not at risk

(a) The suggestion that showing support for Palestinians undermines patient care is disingenuous and unfounded. Suppressing support for a particular cause does not mean that HCWs will discriminate against patients in the care they provide. In reality, HCWs are accustomed to, and routinely treat patients who they may not share beliefs with, and are **professionally bound to provide the highest standard of care to all patients**.

Methods of workplace repression against Palestinian solidarity: Political Neutrality

(b) Polling also shows overwhelming support for an immediate unconditional ceasefire in the conflict, many people sympathise with the Palestinians, a majority support an arms embargo and young people in the UK overwhelmingly support Palestine. There are likely to be **many patients and staff that welcome and feel comforted by signs of solidarity with Palestine**, not alienated or threatened by them.

(c) There is also the deeper question of **how far institutions should go to accommodate the perceived discomfort of patients or staff**.

Patients may have deeply held beliefs, genuine fear or unease at being treated by a HCW of a particular gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or age. Employers are not obliged to accommodate such preferences. These requests are rightly rejected because they are discriminatory. The same standard should apply here: institutions must ensure safe and respectful care for all, but discomfort rooted in bias or discrimination should be dealt with zero tolerance.

2. Healthcare Workers ARE at risk

These bans expose staff to **discrimination, bullying and sanctions**, while also **undermining their legal rights**. Freedom of expression is protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and in some cases under the Equality Act 2010 when linked to philosophical or ethical beliefs.

In this context, suppressing Palestine solidarity does not protect patients — it serves a political agenda, and puts HCWs at risk of sanction, silencing, harassment and exclusion, at a time when the NHS workforce, and its patients, are already overstretched.

3. Solidarity is humanitarian, not political

(a) Banning symbols of solidarity with Palestinians dismisses and insensitively delegitimises the grief and trauma of those affected by the war crimes; HCWs grieving for colleagues, or Palestinian diaspora staff / patients who have lost friends, families and livelihoods, or others moved by conscience. Visible support offers comfort, recognition, and affirms basic human dignity. An 'inclusive environment' would not sanction these.

(b) Wearing a Palestinian symbol or scarf is, fundamentally, a statement against genocide and for the sanctity of human life. Far from political posturing, it expresses fundamental values of compassion, justice, and the sanctity of life, held by a majority of Britons, embedded in NHS principles, the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law.

4. Bans on solidarity ARE political, not neutral

(a) Political symbols are permitted across the NHS, including national campaigns endorsed by NHS employers such as LGBTQ+ rights, anti-racism, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day and so on. These campaigns are also political, as are expressions of solidarity with Ukraine, and are accepted as expressions of justice and to foster an "inclusive environment".

Yet, expressions in support of Palestine have attracted sanction and censorship. This is not neutrality, this is selective suppression of one group and is anti-Palestinian racism, used as a tool for genocide enablement. Far from fostering an inclusive environment, suppressing support for Palestinians while endorsing other political causes exposes the discriminatory nature of these policies.

Methods of workplace repression against Palestinian solidarity: Political Neutrality

Some managers may argue that these expressions attract complaints; in actuality, these complaints stem from prejudice, not principle. By entertaining these, managers risk allowing prejudice to shape policy, rather than consistently apply principles of equality.

(b) Our government, NHS, training institutions and those in power, continue to express support for Israel - despite regular breaches of international humanitarian law and the fact that its leaders face arrest warrants for war crimes. For example, the Department of Health and Social Care flew the Israeli flag in Oct 2023 "in solidarity with the people of Israel", our educational institutions continue to engage in partnerships and hold investments worth millions in companies implicated by Israel's military occupation and human rights abuses, while our NHS continues to work with companies like TEVA and Palantir which operate on illegally occupied land and support Israeli military. Our government are actively complicit in the current genocide by continuing arms sales, offering diplomatic shielding and sharing military surveillance.

In this context, banning healthcare workers from wearing a badge, or advocating for Palestinian rights on humanitarian grounds, is undeniably a political act.

5. Healthcare Workers have a duty to speak out

The duty of health professionals to speak out against the causes of ill health and suffering. HCWs campaign on issues around healthier lifestyles, poverty, poor housing, climate change and racism — all drivers of ill health. These "wider determinants of health" are outside consulting rooms and hospital wards but have profound impacts on the health of communities and individuals.

When John Snow removed the Broad Street pump handle to stop cholera, or when HCWs condemned apartheid in South Africa, or when they advocated for access to COVID-19 vaccines or PPE, HCWs performed their duty to protect health and human life from outside malign influences.

Tens of thousands of civilians, including children and fellow HCWs, have been killed in Gaza. At such times silence makes healthcare complicit and preventing HCWs here from speaking in solidarity stifles us. Our professional duty, to do no harm, to treat all equally, and to speak for those suffering, compels us to act. By banning these expressions, employers are interfering with our moral conscience and duties as HCWs, and causing profound moral injury to many.

A recent opinion piece in the BMJ (11 April 2025) entitled "The healthcare community has a responsibility to highlight the ongoing destruction in Gaza." states:

"In the wake of such destruction (in Gaza), what responsibilities does the healthcare community have? The core values of healthcare—preservation of life, human dignity, justice, and alleviating suffering—place moral obligations on healthcare professionals worldwide to speak out against systematic human rights violations."

Other NHS Trusts may follow Barts, unless they are challenged. Demanding "neutrality" is a tool to silence conscience and impose the political agendas of a small vocal group, supported by those in power.

b) The argument that solidarity with Palestinians is ANTISEMITIC

Many cases of workplace bullying or disciplinary action against HCWs expressing solidarity with Palestinians are founded on allegations of antisemitism. These often arise from falsely equating criticism of Israel or Zionism, with antisemitic speech.

This conflation is inaccurate and dangerous. It erodes freedom of expression, constitutes anti-Palestinian racism, and undermines efforts to address real antisemitism.

Antisemitism is the hostility, prejudice, or discrimination against Jewish people based on religion, ethnicity or culture. The [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) definition of antisemitism](#) definition of antisemitism (discussed later in this section) is a non-legally binding working definition that was designed as a [monitoring tool](#) and has been weaponised to further political agendas.

Anti-Zionism is opposition to the political ideology of Zionism, the ethno-nationalist movement advocating for a Jewish state in historic Palestine. It is a movement which was racist from its inception, and has in practice created an apartheid state. Zionism is not inherently Jewish - there are more [Christian Zionists in the USA alone](#) (over 30 million) than there are Jewish people in the world. Opposition to Zionism is opposition to settler colonialism, displacement of Palestinian people, and systemic human rights violations.

Framing anti-Zionism as antisemitism is a deliberate strategy to delegitimize criticism of Israeli policies and silence solidarity with Palestinian liberation while hiding a much more rampant and virulent Islamophobia in the Middle East and in Western countries. This conflation erases the voices of all of us, including many Jewish individuals and groups, including the Jewish Network for Palestine (JNP) and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN). Framing all opposition to Zionism as antisemitism falsely stereotypes all Jews as Zionists — a claim that is itself antisemitic.

The distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is crucial for addressing both Palestinian oppression and antisemitism effectively. It is entirely possible, and necessary, to challenge Israel's political ideology while unequivocally condemning antisemitism. Being anti-Zionist means being anti-racist across the board, i.e. being against all forms of racism, including Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism and antisemitism.

It Is Not Antisemitic to Criticise Zionism

- Zionism is a political movement / belief aimed at establishing a Jewish state through colonisation, dispossession and military occupation of the land of Palestine.
- Zionism, like apartheid, is a political ideology, not an ethnic group or a religion.
- Jewish Zionism has been in existence for around 140 years whereas Judaism has been in existence for thousands of years. [Christian Zionism arose much earlier](#), among the Puritans in the 17th century as a belief in biblical prophecy. Evangelical Christian Zionists are a powerful political bloc in the United States today.

Methods of workplace repression against Palestinian solidarity: Antisemitism

- It is possible to be Zionist and antisemitic; indeed the British government's Balfour Declaration (1917) supported a "Jewish national home" in Palestine as a way to move Jews out of Europe. Edwin Montagu, the only Jewish member of the Cabinet in 1917 was an anti-Zionist and opposed the Declaration as antisemitic. This followed the Balfour Government's 1905 Aliens Act, introduced to restrict immigration, was aimed mainly at Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe.
- Historically, Zionism was a fringe tendency among Jews because most wanted equal political rights where they lived. This changed after World War II following the horrors of the holocaust under the Nazis. Today, many Jews oppose Zionism, and this has rapidly increased since October 7th 2023, as more people recoil from the horrors of the genocide in Gaza, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Many Orthodox and religious Jews reject Zionism, and anti-Zionist Jewish groups such as the Jewish Network for Palestine (JNP) and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) strongly oppose Zionism.
- Importantly, the legal employment case involving David Miller **established anti-Zionism as a belief, and therefore protected under the EqA 2010**. You cannot be discriminated against by your employer on the basis of being anti-Zionist or expressing anti-Zionist views.

There is an **informative document on Zionism here**.

It Is Not Antisemitic to Criticise Israel

- Israel is a country. Criticising its government or military policies, including apartheid, war crimes or genocide, is political comment and not hate speech. This is true for any country. Criticising South Africa for its apartheid policies was not racist against white South Africans.
- Many Jews globally do not identify with Israel's actions. Assuming all Jews support Israel is itself a dangerous stereotype and antisemitic.
- Thousands of Jews in the UK have consistently joined Palestine solidarity marches condemning Israel's policies. The 'Jewish Bloc' are a regular and presence at these demonstrations, and state:
- "Our strong vibrant presence is always warmly embraced by fellow marchers. These demonstrations present no threat to the safety of Jewish communities. The police have not identified a single instance of harm directed towards worshippers at any synagogue. This decision (to ban or restrict the protests) has been taken not to protect Jews but to indulge transparent pro-Israel advocacy."

The IHRA definition of antisemitism

The UK government adopted the non-legally binding International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism in 2016, after lobbying from pro-Israel groups and others. The government imposed it across the board on education, with the majority of universities adopting IHRA in 2020/21 after threats of cuts in funding if they did not do so.

There is a concerted effort by pro-Israel groups to have the IHRA definition adopted by the NHS as policy. In a meeting with West Streeter, the Health Secretary, in early December 2024 they presented their priorities, which include: "A single accepted authoritative definition of antisemitism (IHRA working definition), which has been adopted already widely by public sector bodies, and has a legal basis, must be recognised". The IHRA definition has no legal basis, as the document itself states. However, should it be adopted by NHS employers, it may lead to HCWs being disciplined in the workplace if they breach the IHRA provisions.

Methods of workplace repression against Palestinian solidarity: Antisemitism

The GMC accepts that there is no single legal definition of antisemitism and draws on multiple sources, including legal advice, dictionaries, and definitions from IHRA and the [Jerusalem Declaration](#).

The IHRA definition however is problematic and is widely opposed by academics and human rights experts for many years. The wording of the definition is vague and open to misuse. [Geoffrey Robertson KC](#) warned that its loose wording may suppress legitimate criticism of Israel and human rights advocacy, while also stating that it does not cover the most insidious forms of hostility to Jewish people.

According to Ilan Pappé, an Israeli historian and professor at the University of Exeter, the inclusion of the word “holocaust” in the title of the definition has been key to its adoption by many bodies. [This 2021 article from the Institute of Middle East Understanding \(IMEU\)](#) is a good summary of the problems with the definition, and the widespread opposition to it, [including by the original drafter of the definition](#) to the way IHRA is being used. More recently (in 2023) it was criticised by over 100 Israeli and international civil society organisations, in a letter to the UN, for being [“used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and thus chill and sometimes suppress, non-violent protest, activism and speech critical of Israel and/or Zionism.”](#)

In April 2025 dozens of Jewish academics in the United States took part in a day of action to defy the IHRA definition. [They too explain in this video](#) that most of the examples of antisemitism given in the IHRA document are criticisms of the state of Israel, not of Jews or Judaism, and the main purpose of the document is to prevent criticism of Israeli policies and silence advocacy for Palestinian rights. They also say that if their universities were to adopt the IHRA definition, it would make it impossible for them to have open discussions or research and teach about Palestine/Israel, and that it has been used against left wing and human rights groups advocating for Palestinian rights, while it sidelines the very real threat to Jews coming from right wing, white nationalist groups.

In summary, **the IHRA definition protects Israel, not Jews, and it diverts attention away from the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestine into accusations and discussions about what is and what is not antisemitism.** It is not fit for purpose, non-legally binding and cannot be used to determine what constitutes antisemitism in employment or disciplinary procedures in the NHS. Needless to say, criticising the IHRA definition itself is also not antisemitic.

Please see Appendix for a detailed look into some of the examples of the IHRA definition.

Using the term “GENOCIDE” in relation to Palestine

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in January 2024 that there is a credible legal basis to believe that Israel is committing genocide, in a case brought by South Africa and now supported by [12 other countries](#).
- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued [warrants of arrest for Israeli leaders Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant](#) for the “war crime of starvation as a method of warfare and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.”
- [Dozens of international legal bodies, scholars, and humanitarian organisations](#), including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Medecins sans Frontiers and others, state that Israel’s actions do constitute genocide.

Methods of workplace repression against Palestinian solidarity: Antisemitism

- Since March 18th 2025 Israel has stepped up its killing of children and women to dozens every day, is openly executing paramedics and destroying all healthcare facilities. It has bombed desalination plants, destroyed the sewage system, almost all civil infrastructure, the vast majority of farming land and housing in Gaza.
- **Since 2 March 2025 Israel has imposed a total blockade on Gaza including all food, water, fuel and medicines.** This is a policy of deliberate mass starvation, a war crime and a crime against humanity, and aimed at the extermination of the Palestinian people in part or in whole, the very definition of genocide.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, said in her detailed report "Anatomy of a Genocide" in April 2024 to the United Nations "Genocidal intent and practices are integral to the ideology and processes of settler colonialism"

Supporters of Israel and Zionism argue that comparing the genocide in Gaza, to that of the Nazi genocide of Jews, is antisemitic because it minimises the latter. Our history in the last 500 years, is littered with genocides, mostly perpetrated under colonialism. At least 15 million Africans died in the transatlantic slave trade, 10 million or more Congolese people were killed under Belgian colonisation from 1885-1908; over half the Herero and Nama people in Namibia were killed by the German occupation between 1904-1908, in the 20th century's first genocide, 1.5 million people died in the Armenian genocide in under the Ottomans, and 800,000 people died in the Rwanda genocide. They each had their own characteristics, but referring to these as genocides does not detract from their individual horror and trauma of the victims.

It is therefore not antisemitic to use the word genocide in relation to Gaza; it accurately describes what is taking place, just as it does for other similar events in history.

Using the term "HOLOCAUST" in relation to events in Gaza

A holocaust is defined by Oxford Languages as "destruction or slaughter on a mass scale, especially caused by fire...".

An estimated 17 million people were killed in programs of organised mass murder and ethnic cleansing across Eastern Europe, under the Nazi ideology of Aryan racial supremacy, with the goal of eradicating Jewish, Slavic, Romani peoples as well as the disabled, LGBTQ+, communist and socialist groups. The term 'Holocaust' is commonly used to describe the murder of 6 million European Jews by the Nazis during World War II.

Our social media feeds repeatedly show images and videos of Palestinians being burned alive after bombing and missile strikes by Israel. The term is also used by Palestinian and non-Palestinian writers to describe what is happening in Gaza. Some Jewish scholars, rabbis and holocaust survivors have also invoked Holocaust comparisons to protest at Israel's actions.

The role of Zionism as a tool for the West to further its geopolitical interests

Western power, particularly US and Western Europe, have adopted Zionism to serve their imperial and economic interests: maintaining regional dominance, selling weapons, controlling oil and gas resources, the strategically important Suez canal, and preserving racial and political hierarchies.

Overstating Zionist power — claiming it controls the media or dictates Western policy reverses the actual balance of power and influence. It shifts attention away from the governments and corporations that materially benefit from occupation and war, and instead revives antisemitic narratives of secret global control.

Section III

Facing challenges at work for expressing support for Palestine

Facing workplace investigations or disciplinary action can be very stressful and isolating. While the pressures we could face are significant, there is a variety of support available: from your union, from other HCWs and organisations, emotional and psychological support, and legal assistance. Many people have successfully resisted efforts to silence them. The key thing is not to fight this on your own - your employer and managers may try to isolate you, and make you feel you are the problem. You are not - it is they and their efforts to silence us speaking out against genocide who are wrong.

Palestinian HCWs continue to be actively targeted, along with their families, under bombardment, siege, threat of abduction, torture and systematic attacks on their profession. It is vital we say this is a crime, this must stop and demand that our unions and professional associations also speak out against this terrible injustice.

These challenges are part of a broader struggle - not just for our rights as HCWs, but for the Palestinian people. Speaking out and resisting challenges builds the cultural and political change needed to end their oppression. There is no doubt that the international "rules based order" is being set aside by the western powers, as they fail to hold Israel accountable for multiple breaches of international humanitarian law. This poses grave dangers for all of us in the future, not least in the erosion of our own basic human rights here in the UK.

Standing firm in solidarity with them is part of resisting that injustice.

1. Know your rights and duties

- You have a right to freedom of expression, protected under UK law. This includes the right to express support for Palestinians, and use terms like "apartheid" or "genocide". These critique Zionism as a political ideology rooted in apartheid and settler colonialism,, not Judaism or Jewish people.
- Expressing political views, including support for Palestine, does not breach professional standards, provided your conduct remains inclusive and your clinical care is unaffected.
- Employer dress codes cannot override your legal right to express yourself, as long as safety and communication are not compromised.
- Your core professional duty is to provide safe, respectful, and non-discriminatory care to all patients, and to treat colleagues with the same professionalism.

Facing challenges at work for expressing support for Palestine

2. Understand your context

- **Know your internal policies.** Familiarise yourself with your employer's policies on dress code, social media, disciplinary procedures, and grievance mechanisms. These documents are usually available on your organisation's intranet or via HR. You have the right to access them.
- **Join a trade union.** Trade unions play a role in protecting their members' rights, including defending members against unfair treatment, discrimination, or intimidation. Membership also strengthens collective efforts to improve working conditions. It is important to register before any workplace issue arises, as unions may be unable to represent members for matters that pre-date their membership.
- **Build your local support network.** Connect with healthcare worker groups campaigning in support of Palestine — see the contacts section. These groups can offer solidarity, legal signposting, and strategic advice. Speak to colleagues or friends at work who you trust and who may share your values. Forming a small local support group can reduce isolation and help you respond effectively if targeted.
- **Review your employer's political stances.** Examine whether your Trust or employer has previously taken political stances or supported causes, for example, flying flags, endorsing campaigns, or partnering with any institutions. This context can help highlight inconsistencies in the application of "neutrality" policies and may strengthen your case if your expression of solidarity with Palestine is being challenged. Public statements, social media posts, or procurement relationships (e.g., with companies based in illegal settlements) can be relevant.
- **Look at equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) frameworks.** Your employer may have internal EDI policies or networks that commit to anti-racism, inclusion, or "psychological safety." These can be useful tools to hold institutions accountable if you are being silenced or discriminated against for your political beliefs or identity.

3. Manage your social media

- **Understand professional expectations.** Uphold standards of respect, confidentiality, and professionalism online, as they would in clinical settings. Expressing political views is not prohibited, but these must not amount to harassment or discrimination.
- **Familiarise yourself with local policy.** Your NHS Trust or employer will likely have a social media policy. You should feel empowered to use your voice as a HCW. However, do not identify your employer when posting to avoid bringing the trust into "disrepute". Express your views as your own (not affiliated to your employer).
- **Online behaviour.** Be cautious in sharing material that could be misinterpreted, and always keep language professional. Beware of accounts (real or bots) designed to entrap and purposely provoke you. Do not engage in destructive 'debate'. If you do engage in discourse, argue against ideas, not people.
- **Consider your privacy settings and your content.** Certain content is more likely to be challenged. For example, while 'armed resistance' is legal under international law, supporting a terrorist organisation is illegal. Consider your language and always stay within the bounds of your professional and legal framework.
- **Document and seek advice if challenged.** If your social media activity is questioned by your employer, request details in writing and seek support from a union rep or legal advisor. Keep records of all posts and interactions relevant to the concern.
- **Anticipate risks.** While it is important to be cautious, do not be intimidated into silence. Expressing support for Palestinian rights, critiquing state violence, or sharing verified information from humanitarian organisations is not unprofessional. The key is how it is done, not whether it is done.

4. Engaging with management

Concerns are normally vague. If you are contacted, **do not panic**.

- **Insist on formal meetings and procedures.** If asked to attend an informal meeting, clarify what this is in relation to, why and what employment procedure is being followed. This gives you time to seek advice and avoids being caught off-guard in an informal conversation that later becomes formalised.
- **Identify the issue. Request clarity.** Ask for a written explanation of the concerns. The onus falls on the employer – do not be defensive, and do not assume the nature of the allegation. Do not be tempted to refute all and any behaviour. Ask for specific details and engage with those specific details only.
- **GOLDEN RULE** If a phrase or allegation has not been mentioned in a complaint, do not bring it up yourself.
- **Ask for detail.** If for example, accused of antisemitic behaviour, clarify the behaviour in question and, which definitions are being used. The employer are unlikely to identify the complainant exactly, but do ask. Many complaints are vague or lack detail; specificity is key to defending yourself.
- **Seek early advice.** If any concerns are raised about your conduct or expression of political views, it is important to seek support as early as possible – ideally from a trade union representative, a trusted colleague, or a Palestine solidarity group with relevant experience. Delaying until a formal investigation is underway may limit your options for support and representation.
- **Do not attend meetings alone.** You are entitled to have a union rep, legal advisor, or trusted colleague present at any meeting.
- **Make notes and keep a record of all documentation.** Ask to record meetings or take detailed notes. Request that management circulate minutes of the meeting and ensure you review and amend them as necessary. Keep a copy of all interaction – messages, emails, phone conversations etc.
- **Consult ACAS for general guidance.** ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) offers free, impartial advice on workplace rights and procedures, including template letters and a helpline (0300 123 1100). However, ACAS primarily aims to mediate compromise – if your employer is actively suppressing political speech, ACAS may offer limited help.
- **Keep the focus on principle.** Many allegations or investigations aim to deflect from the real issue – genocide in Gaza and your right to express solidarity with those affected. Framing this clearly helps reinforce the legitimacy of your position.
- **You can make a complaint.** If you believe you are being unfairly treated, bullied, harassed or discriminated against, seek advice on submitting a formal complaint or grievance. Every NHS employer must have procedures to address this
- **Consider legal action if necessary.** If you believe your employer has acted unlawfully, you may be able to bring a claim to an employment tribunal. Legal advice is essential at this stage, and support may be available through your union or legal advocacy groups listed in the contacts section.

5. Document everything

- Keep a secure record of all communications (emails, meeting notes, group and private messages).
- Note any inconsistencies, such as differential treatment of support for other political causes at your institution.
- If you witness similar actions against colleagues, share this guide and encourage them to document their experiences as well.
- Do not use your work email when communicating about this issue, management may have access to it. Also use a secure social media platform and avoid posting on group chats unless these are secure and you trust everyone on it.

6. Psychological and emotional support

- Isolation and uncertainty, by design, are key tactics of workplace repression, and can be deeply disorienting and distressing. You are not alone - stay connected to individuals that you trust. This is likely to be a testing time, so be prepared and look after yourself.
- Watch out for gaslighting - the deliberate minimising of what is happening to you or underplaying the effect on you.
- Be proactive in addressing your wellbeing with line manager, occupational health service, supervisor, Professional Support and Wellbeing service or similar within your institution that you most trust. Even if these services may not fully understand or address the issue, making contact with them can have value. It notifies management that your wellbeing is being impacted and creates a record of this.
- Be aware that these services are part of your employers' structures, and will likely be shared with your managers. Remember, if you assert yourself and push back, other people are less likely to be targeted and if they are, they will also resist the process.

7. Report your experience

- Reporting workplace repression, discrimination, or retaliation is important in addressing these issues and holding institutions accountable. Even if you are not formally disciplined, documenting and reporting incidents helps create a record of discriminatory practices.
- Internally: i.e. within your NHS Trust or other NHS employer the following channels may be open to you to report discrimination and/or bullying. Be mindful however these are your employers' channels and the people who work in them will be accountable to your employer and may have divided loyalties. This will also be shared with your line manager etc. Do this in conjunction with your union rep or a trusted colleague and go to someone you feel will be sympathetic. Your line manager, HR department, or a designated equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) manager. You can also report to the freedom-to-speak-up guardian or occupational health department.
- Externally: It is essential however that you also report to other outside organisations. British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) can offer you free support and advice, contact details below.

By taking a **measured, documented, and legally grounded approach**, based on established policies, procedures and suitable representation, you can protect yourself while contributing to a stronger collective stance for Palestinian solidarity in the workplace.

Suppression of Palestinian voices and the suppression of the expression of pro-Palestine sentiment is anti-Palestinian racism. The fight for justice for Palestinians is a fight for all our human and democratic rights.

Sources of Support

Speak to trusted friends and colleagues at work, and connect with the groups and organisations listed below that feel aligned with your values. BIMA's support clinic is designed to help in these circumstances and may be able to point you to pastoral support.

The Professional Support and Wellbeing Unit (PSW) is available to doctors and dentists in training, but bear in mind that any reports will be fed back to your line manager - normally your educational supervisor.

If you are not receiving the support you expected from certain individuals or institutions, do not be disheartened and seek guidance elsewhere. These journeys are designed to wear you down unfortunately, but there are many people and networks who understand the gravity of these situations and are committed to standing with you. Your support team should respect your decisions and the approach you want to take – whether that is pushing back assertively, navigating internally, or seeking legal redress.

Be cautious of voices urging you to minimise the issue or prioritise institutional 'calm' over justice. You deserve to be supported without being silenced. And make sure you're not dependent on just one person; if they're unavailable or compromised, having others in your corner will be vital.

1. First steps, reporting and general advice

British Islamic Medical Association Support Clinic

Email in confidence: support@britishima.org

Or call: 0203 551 2497

<https://britishima.org/bima-support-service/>

2. Legal

Your union may suggest a legal firm. It is important to obtain advice from a firm that have experience with such cases. The following have this experience:

- ITN Solicitors <https://www.itnsolicitors.com/> 020 3909 8100
- Bindmans LLP <https://www.bindmans.com/> 020 7833 4433
- Hodge Jones & Allen <https://www.hja.net/> 0808 115 8150
- CAGE International <https://www.cage.ngo/about> 03000302243
- European Legal Support Centre <https://elsc.support/>

Leigh Day <https://www.leighday.co.uk/> 020 7650 1200

Sources of Support

The following organisations have endorsed this guide

British Islamic Medical Association
British Egyptian Medical Association
British Arab Nursing and Midwifery Association
International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network
Cambridge Palestine Solidarity Campaign
Jewish Network for Palestine
Muslim Doctors Association
PalMed Academy

For information on, or queries pertaining to this document, please email GHBDS4P.help@gmail.com



Appendix 1

Reflective Template: Expression of Political Solidarity

Title: Reflection on Workplace Concern – Expression of Solidarity with Palestine

Date:

What happened

A concern was raised about (e.g., my wearing of a badge showing support for the people of Palestine / a social media post I made expressing concern about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza). Keep the description brief, factual and respect confidentiality at all times.

I was subsequently contacted by (manager/educator/HR) and asked to discuss this matter in a meeting on (date).

Impact and personal reflection

The experience has had a significant emotional and psychological impact. I consider the impact on (others). Personally, I was motivated by (state these) and felt (state these e.g., targeted / isolated / professionally vulnerable]. Describe whether you had opportunity to explore the concerns in an open or psychologically safe environment.

(Intentions) e.g. My intention was not to cause offence or distress but to show peaceful, humanitarian solidarity in line with my personal and ethical beliefs.

(Beliefs) e.g. I believe in the importance of respecting the dignity and rights of all people and of speaking out against violence and injustice in all contexts.

Professional standards

(Reflect on professional standards) e.g. the importance of maintaining impartiality and respect in clinical care, commitment to treating all patients with dignity and fairness, regardless of their background or beliefs. I do not believe that my actions have compromised this standard.

I remain committed to the values of compassion, equality, and justice that underpin the NHS and my professional code of conduct.

What I learned / moving forward

This situation has prompted me to seek greater clarity on the interaction between institutional policies, professional regulation, and my legal rights to freedom of belief and expression.

I will continue to reflect on how best to uphold both my professional duties and my ethical convictions, and I am actively seeking support from relevant bodies (e.g., union, professional defence organisation) to ensure I am acting appropriately and responsibly.

Reviewed by: [insert name of union rep / educator / legal adviser if applicable]

Submitted to: [insert portfolio name – e.g., ePortfolio, Horus, Turas]

Confidentiality notice: This reflective entry does not contain any patient-identifiable information.

Appendix 2: Examination of some of the examples of antisemitism listed in the IHRA document:

- **Claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour**

The Zionist project has been a settler colony from the start; the terms settlement and colonisation were commonly used by Zionist leaders and ideologues from the inception of the movement in the late 19th century. In The Jewish State (1896), the book that launched the World Zionist Organization, Theodor Herzl envisioned a future Jewish state in Palestine as "a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism". Like all settler societies, the Zionist settlement in Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel were necessarily supremacist projects - in this case, Jewish supremacy. Since its founding, Israel has awarded rights and privileges to Jews and denied them to non-Jews. This is no surprise as all colonial projects, including settler colonies, have been racist; their fundamental characteristic is racial hierarchies, used to oppress and exploit the indigenous people.

In 1948, the white settler colony in South Africa codified racial discrimination and oppression of black South Africans into the laws of Apartheid. In the same way Israel has enshrined structural racist oppression of Palestinians by enacting more than 60 laws to ensure Jewish supremacy and discriminate against Arabs. This meets the definition of racism according to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted by the UN in 1965.

It is interesting that during the decades-long world-wide campaign against Apartheid, white South Africans never claimed that it was racist against them to say South Africa was a racist state.

Israel's system of separate and unequal laws has been described as apartheid by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam, as well as the Israeli human rights NGO B'Tselem, applying the same human rights standards to Israel that apply to all other countries.

Joel Beinin, a Jewish emeritus professor of history at Stanford University, was one of the academics who took part in a national day of action against the IHRA definition said in an article, *"The IHRA definition of antisemitism is a thinly veiled attack on freedom of speech, academic freedom and free inquiry. It prevents scholars from describing and discussing the significance of well-documented historical and contemporary facts. The definition attempts to censor discussions of the settler-colonialism, systemic racism, apartheid and now genocide that have informed the history and current policies of the state of Israel. According to the examples cited by the IHRA, stating that Israel is a racist endeavour constitutes antisemitism, even if one doesn't say anything about Jews as a people or Judaism as a religion."*

Appendix 2: Examples of antisemitism

Finally on this point, the world's highest court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) held in July 2024 that Israel was committing crimes of apartheid (see [Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024](#)). The highest court of international law has therefore found that Israel is a racist state.

- **Accusing Israel of blood libel**

Blood libel or ritual murder libel is one of the worst antisemitic tropes; it falsely accuses Jews of murdering non-Jews, especially children, in order to use their blood in the performance of religious rituals. This accusation was used for hundreds of years throughout Europe to incite violence and hatred against Jews, and led to pogroms and other extreme acts of violence. The Nazis frequently used blood libel to demonize Jews, especially Julius Streicher's rabidly antisemitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*, which used ritual murder imagery in its antisemitic propaganda. (Streicher was later hanged at the Nuremberg trials for crimes against humanity.)

In another example however of how true antisemitism is being distorted and weaponised to defend Israel and its military, accusations of blood libel are being made against those who criticise the killing of thousands of Palestinians, especially children by the Israeli military in Gaza. [Volger Turk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, criticised this in an OHCHR editorial in January 2024.](#)

The Israeli ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely, who said on British main-stream media that [Israel "may kill 600,000 civilians"](#) in Gaza, and that the 1948 Nakba (when 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their towns and villages), ["is a very popular Arab lie"](#), also engages in this use of blood libel. During an appearance on LBC on 10 October 2024, a listener asked her about [evidence from doctors who worked in Gaza that Israeli snipers were deliberately targeting young Palestinian children](#), she replied "I am not familiar of any fact of killing children" and that ["People are trying to put blood libels on Israel"](#). On 9 October 2024, [OCHAOPT reported that 11,355 children had been killed in Gaza.](#)

Once more we see that any criticism of Israel is deemed to come from hatred of Jews rather than concern for human rights, the rule of law and the sanctity of human life.

- **Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, than to the interests of their own nations.**

It is a central tenet of Zionism that all Jews should be loyal to Israel. The choice of the name "Israel" itself is an attempt to erase any distinction between Jews and Israel: Israel refers "in the biblical and Judaic tradition to the descendants of Jacob, or the Jewish people, (therefore) naming the country "Israel" sought to conflate all Jews with the state of Israel. In doing so, anyone who criticises Israel could be accused of attacking and criticising all Jews, in their entirety, and not the Israeli government and its institutions or policies. The creation of a Jewish state was ["the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State"](#). Here again, Israel implicates all Jews in the establishment of its settler colony on the land of the Palestinians. In this manner, Israel claimed the right to represent world Jewry, who had never granted it such a mandate.

Appendix 2: Examples of antisemitism

Joseph Massad, professor of modern Arab politics and intellectual history, writes in a very informative article, that Non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews, and even some pro-Zionist Jews living in Europe and the US at the time of the establishment of the state of Israel, *"were outraged by this claim to speak for and represent all Jews. They insisted that the Zionist movement and Israel were giving ammunition to the antisemites who accused Jews of dual loyalty as a result of this Israeli claim."*

Despite these warnings, such concerns have been swept aside by the Zionists and Israel, to the extent that Jews who criticise Israel and/or Zionism are labelled "self-hating". Uncritical support is demanded and claimed to be intrinsic to Jewish identity.

And when Jews and gentiles question or criticise this enforced loyalty to Israel, they are labelled antisemitic by the IHRA declaration. This is having your cake and eating it.

- **Applying double standards by requiring of it (Israel) a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.**

In response to this claim of antisemitism in the IHRA document, the letter to the UN by 104 Israeli and international civil society organisations referred to above, stated: *The example on 'applying double standards' opens the door to labeling as antisemitic anyone who focuses on Israeli abuses as long as worse abuses are deemed to be occurring elsewhere," the letter said. "By that logic, a person dedicated to defending the rights of Tibetans could be accused of anti-Chinese racism, or a group dedicated to promoting democracy and minority rights in Saudi Arabia could be accused of Islamophobia."*

This example also once again focuses on Israel and does not mention Jews or Judaism, and the underlying premise is once more the conflation of all Jews with Israel. Put simply it is also a classic example of "whataboutery".