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From: Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Sent: October 26, 2020 5:29 PM
To: Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Cc: Teng, Deborah
Subject: Webform submission: Submission of material 23466

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Application ID: 23466

Submitted values are:

Bill or item of business: **Bill 168, Combating Antisemitism Act, 2020**

Choose a topic

Do you know the bill title or business (e.g., pre-budget consultations) you'd like to speak or submit material about?

Yes

Choose an application

Which application would you like to submit?

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I am submitting material as an individual

Full name

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Paste submission

Re: Bill 168 Combating Anti-Semitism Act, 2020

Say "No" to the IHRA's Definition of Anti-Semitism and Vote Against Bill 168

To: The Standing Committee on Justice Policy:

Anti-Semitism is a grave matter; its mere utterance conjures unspeakable horrors – atrocities typically tied to the Holocaust. Whether in common parlance or academic discourse, it has become a household word and sound definitions of it abound.

A Useful Document?

So of what use is a new definition, the kind adopted in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)? And will this new definition stem the rising tide of anti-Semitism? Can definitions combat racism? Certainly not. Only changed societal conditions will alter the racist mindset of individuals, groups, and institutions. Acts of racism will not be eradicated by definitions. They may be punished, but not eliminated.

A Dangerous Document:

If, in one respect, the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism is useless, in another respect it is highly pernicious. While it poses as a righteous advocate of human rights, the document in fact privileges one ethnic group over another, spawning precisely what it claims to check: i.e., more racism. The document is thus at once dangerous and duplicit. Under the cover of its pious claims, it allows white supremacy to thrive unbridled. Note: there is not a single self-proclaimed anti-Semite or Neo-Nazi group on the IHRA's wanted list. The IHRA definition turns a blind eye to the veritable culprits of heinous racism. Meanwhile, it systematically targets the anti-racist defenders of Palestinian human rights, many of whom are conscientious Jews.

A Penal Code in Educational Disguise:

Under its seemingly innocuous, educational veneer, the IHRA-WDA functions as a penal code that suppresses free speech, and sends veiled threats to the advocates of Palestinian human rights. The document's underlying purpose, then, is to act as a set of commandments, a list of "shall nots" dictating what cannot be said about Jews, but much more emphatically what cannot be said about Israel – a state that deems its 70-year repression of Palestinians irreproachable, indeed, untouchable. So while it serves as a political defense of the Israeli state, the IHRA-WDA fails to offer any protection against (Jewish and other) victims of white (Alt-Right) supremacy. In this, it does nothing to guard against racism. If anything, it reinforces it.

A Flawed Document:

Although dubbed a "working definition," the IHRA-WDA is inherently flawed. At its heart sits a false equation between the state of Israel and Jews more generally. Seven out of eleven instances cited in the definition refer to criticisms of the state of Israel, intertwined with conventional instances of anti-Jew hatred. This confusion is pernicious. Jews are not states. Indeed, these two entities cannot be conflated, except through wilful rhetoric.

To decry Israel's state-sanctioned land theft, state-sanctioned daily torture and interrogation of Palestinian youth, and not least its state-sanctioned incarceration of 2 million Gazans is neither demonization nor misrepresentation; it is legitimate and rightful condemnation of an oppressive regime. In short, a trenchant critique of the current Israeli state is not an expression of anti-Semitism, however much the authors of the IHRA-WDA wish to make it so.

An Intimidating Document:

Under the sacred sign of the Holocaust, the IHRA's flawed definition has compelled many to cower before its

tacit accusations. Are you, Ladies and Gentlemen, among those who you are terrified of being labelled anti-Semitic, should you challenge the proponents of the IHRA-WDA? Have you fallen victim to the false equation made between the condemnation of the Israeli state and the gas chambers? Can you see that this false equation travesties and desecrates the very memory of all those who perished in the Holocaust? Can you see that there are some who cynically use the crucible of anti-Semitism for their own political ends? And will you, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow yourselves to yield to their rhetorical pressure?

Not only deficient in logic, not only misguided in its quest for the true culprits of racism, the IHRA's so-called guidelines lend themselves to a new McCarthyism. I urge you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to look into your conscience today. Ask yourselves: what is the morally right thing to do? The answer is surely clear: strike down this pernicious document that allows racism and white supremacy to thrive unchecked while penalizing those who are genuine advocates of human rights.

Do not let fear of false accusations of anti-Semitism cloud your judgement on this burning matter.

Sincerely,

Michelle Weinroth