

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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Schirmacher on the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism: this would be considered normal for Islam and Christianity

(Bonn, 15.05.2025) At its party conference, the German Left Party (Die Linke) rejected the definition of anti-Semitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) signed by the Federal Republic of Germany—albeit only by a narrow majority and against the wishes of party leader Jan van Aken. On this occasion, the President of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), Prof. Dr. Thomas Paul Schirmacher, publishes the following reflections.

What if we apply the IHRA definition of Antisemitism to Islamophobia and Christianophobia?

Here is an experiment and proposal: What if we translate the IHRA definition about Jews and antisemitism into statements about Islam and Christianity? It then reads quite normally and naturally, including the mentioning of states as target of such hatred. Islamophobia and Christianophobia can take the form of criticism of their majority states. The difference, of course, is that the Jews have only one state with a Jewish majority, while the two largest world religions, Islam and Christianity, have many more states with a majority of the population or the majority religion as the official State Religion according to the countries' constitution. **But hatred of a religion, hatred of the ethnic groups that are its majority, and hatred of states because of their majority religion often go hand in hand,** Israel being only the most visible example.

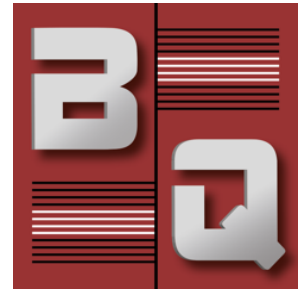
The IHRA non-binding definition of antisemitism

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Additional note: Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”

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Evangelical Missiology, Journal of missiotop – Evangelical Forum for Missions, Cultures and Religions (German Evangelical Alliance) missiotop.org

Evangelical Review of Theology (New York, Bonn) theology.worlddea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology

Giving Hands – International Charity (Bonn) gebende-haende.de

Institut für Islamfragen der Deutschen, Schweizer und Österreichischen Allianz (IfI) islaminstitut.de

International Institute for Islamic Studies (IIIS) (Bonn) islam institute.net

International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) (Bonn, Vancouver, San José – Costa Rica) iirf.global

International Journal for Religious Freedom (IJRF) (Bonn/Toronto) ijrf.org

International Secretariat of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) ishr.org

Islam and Christianity journal.islaminstitut.net

Martin Bucer Seminary (Bonn, Zürich, Tirana, São Paulo, Helsinki, Istanbul, Delhi) bucer.org

SOS World (Brussels) sosworld.be/page-daccueil

Theological Commission of the European Evangelical Alliance europeanea.org

Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft (VKW) (Culture and Science Publ.) vkwonline.com

WEA book series: Global Issues Series / World of Theology Series theology.worlddea.org/global-issues
theology.worlddea.org/world-of-theology

WEA Sustainability Center wea-sc.org

Yearbook on Religious Freedom of the Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance iirf.global/jahrbuch

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Bonn Profiles – Press Reports



My adapted definition of islamophobia

Islamophobia is a certain perception of Muslims, which may be expressed as hatred toward Muslims. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of islamophobia are directed toward Muslim and non-Muslim individuals and/or their property, toward Muslim community institutions and religious facilities.

Additional note: Manifestations might include the targeting of all or of specific Muslim states or ethnic groups, conceived as Muslim collectivity. However, criticism of Muslim states similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as islamophobic.

My adapted definition of christianophobia

Christianophobia is a certain perception of Christians, which may be expressed as hatred toward Christians. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of christianophobia are directed toward Christian and non-Christian individuals and/or their property, toward Christian community institutions and religious facilities.

Additional note: Manifestations might include the targeting of all or of specific Christian states or ethnic groups, conceived as Christian collectivity. However, criticism of Christian states similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as christianophobic.

Note on racism

Further note: Racism and discrimination of specific religious or ethnic groups are wrong in all forms and against all groups. Historically the oldest and geographically most widely distributed forms of racism speak up against (1) the Jews, (2) the Romani ("Gypsies"), and (3) people of darker skin than the majority.

Additional comment

"The IHRA non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism" of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) has been particularly criticized because of the "Additional note" about "Manifestations" following the definition itself, and even more for the examples referenced under the additional note. The additional note states: "Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic." For the purpose of the discussion below I added the introduction to the additional note, but not the examples.

States, supranational organizations and other actors signing the definition have done so either by signing the pure definition *without* the "Additional note" or by signing the additional note and the following examples of manifestations *as part of* the definition, or, like Germany, by signing the definition and *only the first sentence* of the additional note," but *without the examples* of manifestations. Sometimes it is even unclear what a

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State or institution actually signed, that is, whether the first sentence on the additional note or in addition the examples have been included or not. This is even true, for instance, for the European Parliament.

For my proposal described below, I include the first sentence of the additional note, yet exclude the specific examples of manifestations.

Downloads and Links:

- The working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA):
<https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

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page 3/3