

# Jewish Faculty Network launched, applauds CAUT motion in opposition to the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

**Press conference December 9th at 8amPST/9amMST/11amEST/12pmAST**

The link to join the press conference is [here](#).

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82157051560?pwd=aDNVTEptL01ocVd2V2dJWWZjN3pOZz09>

November 30, 2021

On December 9th, the newly-launched [Jewish Faculty Network](#) (JFN) will hold an online press conference in support of the recent motion of the Canadian Association of University Teachers challenging the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism (IHRA). The IHRA definition has been misused to suppress voices critical of the State of Israel.

Robert Kirchner (U of Alberta) and Deborah Cowen (U of Toronto) will moderate, and the following faculty will present:

- Alejandro I. Paz, Anthropology, University of Toronto
- b.h. Yael, Integrated Media, Faculty of Art, OCAD University
- Howard Tzvi Adelman, History and Jewish Studies, Queen's University
- Jillian Rogin, Law, University of Windsor
- Roni Gechtman, History, Mount Saint Vincent University
- Amos Goldberg, Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

JFN is a network of Jewish faculty at Canadian universities and colleges who strongly oppose antisemitism, as well as all forms of racism and discrimination. The JFN emerged in the wake of a letter [signed by over 170 Jewish faculty at Canadian universities and colleges](#) to oppose the IHRA definition of antisemitism. These signatories join thousands of academics [in Canada](#) and around [the world](#) who oppose this definition of antisemitism and its weaponization.

As reflected in [our principles](#), the Jewish Faculty Network (JFN) supports an energetic defense of academic freedom. In the context of Israel/Palestine, this entails respecting a diversity of Jewish voices as well as the views of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim faculty and students. Our opposition to the IHRA definition stems from a deep concern and well-documented recognition that the IHRA is a tool for silencing legitimate criticism of the State of Israel, and specifically, for falsely labelling Palestinian and Palestinian solidarity activism at educational institutions as antisemitic.

On the launch of the Jewish Faculty Network, law professor **Jillian Rogin** explained "I joined the JFN because my Judaism requires me to be vocal about injustice. The Palestine exception to academic freedom is unjust and dangerous. Silencing criticism of a nation-state within academia or anywhere allows gross human rights violations committed against Palestinians to continue with impunity."

**Amos Goldberg**, a historian of the Holocaust from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, says "There are now dozens of documented examples for how the IHRA definition has been used for censorship. Using the IHRA definition, the Trump administration meddled in academic life curbing academic freedom on campuses. The IHRA definition was used by those who managed to cancel lectures, courses and academic events in the USA, UK, Germany, and elsewhere. The influential NGO Monitor used the IHRA definition to accuse the Israeli human right organization B'Tselem of being antisemitic. A charity race to raise money for Gazans that was

scheduled to take place in London in 2019 was canceled because of the IHRA definition. These are just a few examples of the corrosive use of the IHRA definition.”

Two Jewish historians from JFN form part of the panel. Drawing from decades of research, **Howard Tzvi Adelman**, former director of Jewish Studies at Queen’s University, says “the regular reports of discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel and the violence against Palestinians under the control of the Israeli army are a major concern to me. I want Palestinians to enjoy the same democratic rights that I enjoy as a Jewish Israeli. Such aspirations cannot be dismissed as antisemitism, especially drawing on a flimsy, politicized, governmental definition.”

Historian **Roni Gechtman** indicates that “it is out of love for Jewish life and an understanding of Jewish history that I must oppose violent oppression against the Palestinians by the state of Israel. Like a family member confronting violence carried out by someone they love, so I take to task Israel for its actions. This is driven by the opposite of antisemitism, love and an informed reflection on history, not hate and ignorance.”

On the question of criticism of Israel and Palestinian solidarity, **Alejandro Paz** states that “although not all our members endorse the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement against the State of Israel, we recognize it as a legitimate, non-violent form of protest. Calling legitimate Palestinian protest a form of antisemitism is based on a false premise that equates the Jewish community with the State of Israel.”

Finally, with regard to the Jewish Faculty Network’s stance on academic freedom **b.h. Yael** states that “Palestine is not and cannot be an exception to academic freedom. Such an exception is antithetical to the goals of academia which include fostering justice and working to dismantle racism of all kinds. The JFN applauds CAUT for its efforts to ensure that fundamental rights, including academic freedom, freedom of speech and freedom to protest state oppression, are protected on our campuses.”

As we celebrate Hanukkah, a festival arising from the struggle for freedom, the Jewish Faculty Network hopes that the commitment to social justice key to Jewish identity will guide the actions of Jewish community organizations across this country. May Hanukkah’s celebration of the struggle against oppression inspire movements that actively oppose racism and antisemitism. May these movements continue to build support for the protection of Palestinian human and political rights, inside and outside our universities.

We hope you will be able to join us on [Thursday December 9th at 8am PST/ 9am MST/11am EST](#)

Full URL: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82157051560?pwd=aDNVTEptL01ocVd2V2dJWWZjN3pOZz09>

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