

21 May 2016

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Sent via email: Rachel.tuffin@college.pnn.police.uk

Cc: Steve White, Chair, Police Federation, stephen.white@polfed.org
Dave Prentis, General Secretary, UNISON, d.prentis@unison.co.uk

Re: antisemitism as defined in the *Hate Crime Operational Guidance*

Dear Rachel Tuffin

We are writing to express our concerns about the College of Policing 2014 document, *Hate Crime Operational Guidance*. It conflates antisemitism with anti-Israel criticism or anti-Zionism, especially boycott activity, which is thereby regarded as a potential crime of race hate. We are concerned that policing activity may apply this definition.¹ We copy our letter to the Police Federation of England and Wales, as well as to UNISON, which jointly helped to establish the College.

The official definition of antisemitism matters for policing and beyond. Some politicians have promoted your guidance document as an authoritative source. For example, on 30.03.2016 [Eric Pickles](#) quoted its definition of antisemitism, especially this criterion: 'Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.' See below why this criterion is misguided.

At around the same time Michael Gove denounced the campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) as follows:

But worse than that – worse than libelling the state of Israel – the BDS campaign, by calling for the deliberate boycott of goods manufactured by Jewish people, by calling for the shunning of the Jewish state, and the rejection of Jewish commerce and Jewish thought, actually commits a crime worse than apartheid (quoted in *Middle East Monitor*, 04.04.2016).

Antisemitic motives are likewise implied by the *Hate Crime* guidance: 'Such manifestations could also target the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity' (p.37). Both those statements misrepresent the anti-Israel boycott campaign as targeting Jews; see again our explanation below.

¹ Appended is our letter to Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe on implications for policing.

Moreover, Bob Neil MP sent Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe a letter claiming that the website *Innovative Minds* encourages antisemitism and incites violence (*Daily Mail*, 08.04.2016), apparently on grounds that its text supports resistance to the Israeli Occupation.

Given the pervasive conflation of antisemitic and anti-Israel views, our letter explains why this is misguided, especially in your guidance document. For other key quotes, our text includes hyperlinks. Our letter concludes with specific requests to you.

False equation: 'anti-Israel = antisemitic'

The College of Policing guidance wrongly characterises anti-Zionism as a 'new antisemitism'. The latter includes any statements 'denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour', according to the guidance (p.37). In reality, a significant part of world Jewry has always seen the Zionist project as racist and as jeopardising Jews' security in the countries where they live. As regards that threat, antisemites have commonly regarded Jews as a separate nation who belong in Palestine (or later in Israel), thus complementing Zionist views.

Moreover the equation '*anti-Israel = antisemitic*' presumes a total identity between all Jews everywhere and Israel. Yet we see this equation as grossly stereotyping all Jews – and thus as racist.

The *Hate Crime* guidance says of antisemitism, 'Such manifestations could also target the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity' (p.37). Here anti-Israel activity is suspected or even stigmatised for targeting Jews. Yet in reality the BDS campaign targets Israeli institutions (e.g. companies' exports, official university activities, etc.) and complicit companies operating here – regardless of individuals' religious affinity. Such opposition to a regime's activities cannot be racist. The BDS campaign does not target Israelis (much less Jews) acting as individuals.

As a fundamental problem, Israel has always called itself a 'Jewish state' or 'the state of world Jewry'. Indeed, Zionist organisations promote Jews' support for Israel as integral to Jewish identity. If some people consequently associate Jews with Israel's crimes (as noted on p.36), then this unjust association arises from the Zionist project. Yet its supporters instead blame antisemitic motives.

As authority for the false equation, 'anti-Israel = antisemitic', the *Hate Crime* guidance cites the 'Working Definition of Antisemitism'. This was supposedly adopted in 2005 by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Yet this definition was never adopted by the EUMC. The FRA's 2014 [report](#) on antisemitism does not cite the definition which has been mistakenly attributed to the EUMC.² Its non-official status was recently confirmed: the 'working

² The 'working definition' originated from the EUMC's consultation with the American Jewish Committee (AJC), a pro-Israel lobby group; see the [article](#) by Richard Kuper. When the definition

definition of antisemitism... is not an official EU definition and has not been adopted by FRA', according to this body ([quoted](#) on 20.04.2016). Speaking for Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfjFP), Richard Kuper complained that the College's *Hate Crime* guidance is 'guilty of severe misrepresentation about the provenance of and authority of a so-called EUMC Working Definition of Antisemitism' (*Middle East Monitor*, 12.04.2016). See also his [2011 article](#) in *Open Democracy*.

Opposing true antisemitism

Like all forms of racism, antisemitism negatively stereotypes a societal group and so warrants strong opposition. As a traditional definition, antisemitism is simply hatred of Jews. This is sometimes expressed as 'mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as individuals or the power of Jews as a collective...', as rightly noted in the *Hate Crime* guidance (p.27).

Yet this traditional definition has been broadened for political motives, especially in the past decade. For a brief history of the semantic changes and contentious definitions, see the article by Ben White, '[Shifty antisemitism wars](#)', 21.04.2016. Along the above lines, antisemitism is being redefined so as to protect Israel from criticism and boycott.

The *Hate Crime Operational Guidance* appears unaware of those political motives. As a result it defines antisemitism in a partisan way, potentially criminalising the political beliefs and activities of pro-Palestine activists, thus infringing their political rights. Such an unduly broad definition should not be promulgated or adopted in an open, free, democratic society. People should be free to participate in legitimate political activities, all the more so when they aimed to achieve compliance with international law.

By conflating anti-Israel activity with antisemitism, there is an extra danger. Namely, when real antisemitism is rightly exposed, some people may assume this is just another attempt to silence pro-Palestine voices. This conflation undermines our collective effort to stamp out antisemitism once and for all.

Requests to you

Therefore we ask you to withdraw the *Hate Crime Operational Guidance* in its current form, and then to publish a new version omitting two features:

- the unduly broad definition conflating antisemitism with criticism of Israel/Zionism; and
- references to the EUMC as the putative source of that definition.

disappeared from the FRA website in 2013, the [AJC](#) reiterated its earlier argument that 'a new form of anti-Semitism' had 'demonized the State of Israel and questioned its very legitimacy'. This rationale for the AJC's definition indicates the aim to protect Israel – conflated with protecting Jews.

We also request a meeting, i.e. with representatives of the signatory organisations below.

Signed

Abbas Ali, Inminds

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead, Chair, British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP)

Ilan Pappé, Professor of History, Fellow of the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, the University of Exeter

Les Levidow, Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC)

Massoud Shadjareh, Chair, Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, Secretary, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG)

Rob Ferguson, Jewish teacher, Newham NUT