

# NEXUS

## *Talking About Antisemitism: A Messaging Guide for Policymakers*

This guide, produced by The Nexus Project, helps policymakers discuss antisemitism, reflecting Nexus's core conviction that combating antisemitism and protecting democratic values and free expression are complementary goals. The fight to combat antisemitism and protect democracy requires both moral clarity and careful language. Talking about antisemitism without precision can alienate key constituencies, be exploited by bad-faith actors, or conflate legitimate political debate with genuine hatred.

### Core Messaging Principles

- **Define antisemitism clearly.** Antisemitism encompasses hostile beliefs and actions targeting Jews for being Jewish — including conspiracy theories about Jewish control, Holocaust denial, physical threats, and the application of double standards. Condemnation should be direct and unambiguous.
- **Condemn it across the political spectrum.** White nationalist ideology remains the primary driver of antisemitic violence in the U.S. But antisemitic rhetoric also appears in both conservative and progressive contexts, often in debates about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Selective condemnation undermines credibility.
- **Distinguish antisemitism from criticism of Israel.** Criticizing Israeli policy, supporting Palestinian rights, calling for a ceasefire, or making harsh characterizations of the Israeli government is NOT antisemitism. What IS antisemitism: using anti-Jewish tropes to attack Israel, holding all Jews responsible for Israeli government actions, denying Jewish self-determination, or celebrating violence against Jews. Conflating the two alienates liberal Jews, stifles legitimate debate, and can actually embolden antisemitic narratives.

### Legislative Positioning

- **Support ARPA.** The Antisemitism Response and Prevention Act is the recommended legislative model. It does not weaponize Title VI against protected political speech and ensures full funding of programs that protect the Jewish community, like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, without partisan strings attached.
- **Champion the 2023 National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.** The Biden administration's strategy was the first federal effort of its kind, drawing on broad bipartisan and Jewish communal support. It offers a whole-of-society framework spanning education, law enforcement, and community safety.
- **Oppose codifying any antisemitism definition into law.** Educational frameworks — including the Nexus Document, the IHRA definition, and the Jerusalem Declaration — are valuable tools for advocates and scholars. But definitions should never be enacted as policy. As with every other form of bigotry, doing so is unnecessary to address concrete harms and risks chilling constitutionally protected expression.

### Key Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Selective condemnation.** Only calling out antisemitism from one political direction reads as partisan rather than principled — and it is.
- **Overly broad definitions.** Conflating all criticism of Israel with antisemitism is factually inaccurate and alienates liberal Jews, Arab and Muslim communities, and free speech advocates.
- **Dismissiveness.** Treating antisemitism as less urgent than other forms of bigotry ignores consistent evidence and is politically tone-deaf.
- **Weaponizing Jewish safety.** Using antisemitism charges primarily to attack political opponents — while ignoring other serious threats — erodes trust and can cause the issue to be taken less seriously overall.