

August 6, 2023

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Dear Mayor Poppa and the Members of the Roeland Park City Council,

We, the undersigned, representing the organized Jewish community of Greater Kansas City, ask the City of Roeland Park to stand with our community against rising rates of antisemitism through the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism.

In April 2014, three people were murdered in an attack on the Jewish community of Overland Park, Kansas. Since then, violent antisemitism has continued to rise in the United States. In October 2018, eleven Jews were killed in the deadliest attack against the Jewish community in U.S. history at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Jews have also been murdered in Poway, California; Jersey City, New Jersey; and Monsey, New York simply for being Jews.

According to the FBI 2021 Hate Crimes Statistics, attacks on American Jews—who make up less than 2% of the American population—account for 63% of all religiously based hate crimes. Furthermore, from 2021 to 2022, the ADL reports a shocking 36% increase in antisemitic incidents - over what were already the highest levels of antisemitism ever recorded in this country.

We are united as a community to say: Enough.

The first step to combating antisemitism is understanding it; we cannot adequately fight what we cannot define. We, the undersigned, affirm our support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, which provides useful examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself today. Defining antisemitism using the internally accepted “gold standard” IHRA definition is an important step to combat this ancient hatred.

We know that antisemitism stems from a number of sources and appears across the political spectrum. We condemn antisemitism in all its forms, including hatred and prejudice directed toward Jews, stereotypes or conspiracy theories about Jews, Holocaust denial or distortion, and denying the Jewish people’s right to self-determination and/or the Jewish state’s right to exist.

We call upon our leaders in the Roeland Park City Council to join us in declaring unequivocally that antisemitism is incompatible with fundamental democratic values, and to adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism as an important educational resource for local agencies.

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Signed,

Jewish Community Relations Bureau | AJC  
The Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City  
Midwest Center for Holocaust Education  
The Jewish Community Foundation  
The Temple, B'nai Jehudah  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Congregation Beth Israel Abraham Voliner  
Kehilath Israel Synagogue  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
Temple Beth Sholom

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