

May 5, 2026

City Council  
City of East Palo Alto  
2415 University Avenue  
East Palo Alto, CA 94303

Dear Mayor Lincoln and Members of the East Palo Alto City Council,

I am writing to thank you for adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism this evening. At a time when Jewish communities are facing rising hostility, fear, and isolation, your vote sends an important message that antisemitism must be named clearly if it is going to be confronted effectively.

The IHRA definition is not a speech code. It does not prohibit criticism of Israel, advocacy for Palestinians, political disagreement, protest, or debate. In fact, the definition itself makes clear that criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country is not antisemitic. What it does identify are the forms of antisemitism that are often missed or excused in modern public life: conspiracy theories about Jewish power, holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, denying the Jewish people the same right to self-determination afforded to others, or using Israel as a vehicle to demonize Jews as Jews. That distinction matters.

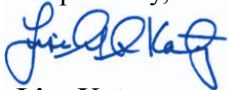
To Vice Mayor Abrica and Councilmember Romero, who voted against the adoption, I urge you to reconsider what this definition actually does. Recognizing antisemitism does not diminish anyone else's pain. This is not an "all lives matter" moment. When a specific community is targeted by a specific form of hatred, the answer is not to dilute the response into a general statement against all hate. Of course all hate matters. But when antisemitism is the issue before the Council, Jewish residents deserve the dignity of having their experience addressed directly and accurately.

A city can stand against antisemitism and also protect free speech. A city can recognize the suffering of Palestinians and also reject the targeting of Jews. A city can support robust political debate and still draw a line when that debate crosses into bigotry. These are not competing values. They are the foundation of a healthy civic community.

East Palo Alto's adoption of IHRA is not an act of censorship. It is an act of clarity. It gives city leaders, staff, law enforcement, educators, and residents a practical tool to better understand when anti-Jewish hatred is present, including when it appears in forms that are more coded, political, or socially acceptable than the antisemitism of the past.

Thank you for taking this issue seriously and for standing with the Jewish community at a moment when that leadership matters deeply.

Respectfully,



**Lisa Katz**

Chief Government Affairs Officer  
Combat Antisemitism Movement