

**Date of adoption of statement: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Review date: January 2023**

**Statement owner: Policy Ethics and Human Rights Committee**

## **BASW UK Statement against antisemitism<sup>1</sup> and anti-Jewish discrimination and hatred**

### **Preamble**

BASW is committed to working to end racism and oppression in social work and across society as part of our all-embracing commitment to promoting human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for all.

This is guided by our UK Code of Ethics (2021) <https://www.basw.co.uk/about-basw/code-ethics>, and is described in our overarching statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) <https://www.basw.co.uk/basw-uk-summary-position-statement-equality-diversity-and-inclusion> and our BASW UK Statement on Anti-Racism <https://www.basw.co.uk/basw-uk-statement-anti-racism>

This statement against antisemitism can be read in conjunction with these other source documents. BASW welcomes feedback on this and other position statements to develop them further. Comments can be sent via [comms@basw.co.uk](mailto:comms@basw.co.uk)

BASW UK recognises that race can mean colour or nationality (including citizenship) and also covers all ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that, in accordance with UK legislation, Jewish people are considered an ethnoreligious group. 'Religion and belief' are also protected characteristics.

With this broad commitment comes the necessity for understanding and action on different forms of racism and oppression against specific groups in society. While there may be important commonalities for groups experiencing oppression and hatred, there are also distinctive forms, histories and societal and political driving factors that shape specific discriminations and experiences. This includes the racism and anti-religious

---

<sup>1</sup> NB The word 'antisemitism' came into use in the late nineteenth century to describe pseudoscientific racial discrimination against Jews but is now used more generally to describe all forms of discrimination, prejudice or hostility towards Jews. In this document 'antisemitism' is sometimes qualified with other descriptors but when used throughout the document should be understood as meaning all forms of anti-Jewish sentiment, discrimination, hostility or hatred, direct and indirect.

<sup>2</sup> The Equality Act 2010 governs and sets the legal parameters of BASW UK's approach to discrimination. It does not apply in Northern Ireland which has different legislation against discrimination towards racial and religious groups. The meaning of this statement applies across BASW UK and is consonant with the specific laws in place in N Ireland

experienced by Jewish people (direct discrimination) and people perceived as Jewish and/or negatively associated with Jewish people (indirect discrimination).

## **Legal framework**

BASW is a professional association and is legally accountable to act in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. For the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, an association is an organisation that has at least 25 members and regulates admission to membership using rules and a selection process which applies to BASW.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an association to discriminate against or victimise its members, prospective members, guests and associates, on the basis of race and religion. Discrimination can be 'direct' or 'indirect'. The Equality Act 2010 also makes it unlawful for an association to harass the same groups of people on the basis of race and ethnicity, or religion and belief.

This statement outlines BASW's position against antisemitism in the context of meeting our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and beyond that, as a professional association for social workers governed by our UK Code of Ethics (2021) which reflects the widened definitions of characteristics within the ethical principles of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) now embedded in our Code (<https://www.basw.co.uk/about-basw/code-ethics>):

*Social workers have a responsibility to challenge oppression on any basis, including (but not limited to) age, capacity, civil status, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, gender identity, language, nationality (or lack of), political beliefs, poverty, race, relationship status, religion, sex, sexual orientation or spiritual beliefs.*

*(BASW Code of Ethics 2021 section 2.2 Social Justice (1) Challenging Oppression)*

This statement on antisemitism is one of a growing groups of statements that acknowledge specific experiences of racism and other oppression by particular groups of people. It can help guide social workers to understand and address antisemitism and the experiences of Jewish people in UK society. It also guides BASW's expectations of and support for members, and BASW's culture and actions as an employer.

## **Statement against antisemitism – definitions and scope**

Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews and can take many forms.

BASW endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)<sup>3</sup> 2016 working definition of antisemitism:

*“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward*

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

*Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”*

Antisemitism in the UK can arise through prejudice against Jewish people based on views about the politics and actions of the Israeli state and government, particularly actions relating to Palestinian lands and people. Antisemitic attacks and threats against British Jewish people and places such as Synagogues measurably increase after (e.g.) military action or conflict between Israel and Palestine.

The IHRA states that ‘*criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic*’.

As part of the International Federation of Social Workers which commits BASW to shared global social work ethical principles and to solidarity with social workers worldwide, we recognise that human rights breaches, discrimination and violence are perpetrated by many governments. BASW may comment on the implications of such actions for social work, citizen welfare and human rights in respect of any government including but not limited to Israel. We will ensure comments on governmental and political action are based on international definitions and conventions on human rights and on evidence.

## **History of antisemitism**

BASW recognises that Jewish people in the UK and across the world have a distinctive history of being targets of discrimination and racial hatred. This dates back centuries in various forms. Jewish communities suffered *pogroms*<sup>4</sup> and other attacks and forced migrations in previous eras in many countries, within and beyond Europe.

One of the most recent in the twentieth century led to the genocide – the Holocaust - by Nazi Germany and its collaborators perpetrated against Jewish people (and other groups) across Europe and beyond. Two thirds of Jewish Europeans were exterminated.

Current day prevalent hate actions based on prejudice and stereotyping of Jewish people have a long cultural and political history. They include wide-spread fabricated accusations, myths and conspiracies. These include but are not limited to Jewish people controlling or seeking to control world politics, big business, finance systems and the media. These are now particularly promoted and gain influence through social media platforms as well as continuing to be evident in mainstream media, public and cultural discourse.

## **Solidarity**

BASW recognises the longstanding and ongoing overt and covert existence, risks and impacts of such hatred within the UK and other countries and supports the work of the Council of Europe<sup>5</sup> and UK and international organisations upholding remembrance of

---

<sup>4</sup> Pogrom: an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group, in particular that of Jewish people in Russia or eastern Europe.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. see <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-9-on-the-fight-against-antisemit/16808b5ac8> and <https://www.coe.int/en/web/antisemitic-anti-muslim-hatred-hate-crimes>

the Holocaust and countering contemporary threats to Jewish communities on a par and indivisible from threats to other racial, ethnic, religious, national and belief groups.

### **Intergenerational impacts**

BASW is also aware and sensitive to ongoing intergenerational traumatic impact, particularly the impact of the twentieth-century European Holocaust on current British Jewish communities. This history has shaped the families and lives of thousands of citizens across the UK. An appreciation of this history and its traumatic impact, and of contemporary experiences of discrimination and hatred, are essential for social work ethics and practices, particularly when working directly or indirectly with Jewish communities. It is also important in supporting Jewish social workers and students.

### **BASW and social work's commitment to antisemitism**

As the professional association for social workers across the UK, we must continue to build our leadership role in tackling antisemitism, particularly as it affects our profession and the people we support.

BASW recognises that antisemitism can exist at an organisational and/or institutional level. For instance, it may be embedded in ways of working that (consciously or unconsciously) create unequal access to services, opportunities and rights in the workplace for Jewish people.

As in all forms of social work, social workers should be able to act as advocates and enable and empower supporters and allies against antisemitism – as with all forms of racism and oppression - appropriate to the situation. Advocacy to tackle antisemitism may include challenging systems and organisations, including social workers' own employing organisation, place of education or contexts.

BASW acts widely to promote an inclusive, more equal society. In this, we will call out and challenge antisemitism and anti-Jewish discrimination on behalf of our members and the profession. We will support our colleagues in the International Federation of Social Workers and other organisations in their efforts to combat racism and antisemitism across the world.

### **Professional resources and learning activities**

Our practice guidance and professional development resources for social workers will routinely embed understanding and action against antisemitism alongside other anti-racist, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory ethics, knowledge and skills. It will draw on best evidence and resources and, where appropriate, will be co-produced with people who use/have used services and with social workers with relevant lived experience of antisemitism.

BASW Will work collaboratively and collectively with committed and supportive organisations and individuals across the social work sector to tackle antisemitism and amplify collective efforts to address it.

## **BASW UK further actions against antisemitism**

BASW will continue to develop specific, UK wide actions against antisemitism. BASW Council recognises that the organisation needs to develop to be more effective in this and to ensure Jewish members of the association and Jewish people in wider society have confidence in BASW's commitment tackling antisemitism and all forms of racism and discrimination.

These will include (and may be further developed from) the following:

- Ensuring our EDI programme develops to ensure equality of access to BASW and recognition of the inclusion requirements and contribution of Jewish members in all part of the association, including its leadership
- Develop our culture and practices to value and support Jewish people including through our internal policies and procedures
- Ensure our services and activities continue to develop to respond to the particular needs of Jewish members including through our learning and other events, our journalism, our involvement opportunities and our advice and representation service.
- Promote learning and development about and activism against antisemitism alongside other organisations including universities providing qualifying education
- Ensure BASW, as an employer, has an open and safe staff culture that values, supports and develops Jewish staff members
- Work with IFSW on international responses to antisemitism
- Challenge antisemitism in wider society and support members to act against this within and outside of BASW.