

MOTION FOR 2018 NEU CONERENCE ON FREE SPEECH ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE AND THE IHRA DEFINITION OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Conference notes the ongoing plight of the Palestinians and in particular the devastating effect of the occupation, illegal settlements and blockade of Gaza on the mental health of the children and young people. It notes the increasing levels of brutality used towards them and the lack of due safeguards exemplified in the fact that Israel classifies Palestinians as adults at 16 whereas the age for Israelis is 18.

Conference notes that in campaigning to highlight these issues and to work towards the recognition of Palestine by the UK, including criticism of Israel, a new definition of antisemitism has been put forward by the International Holocaust Remembrance Association which, in its examples, mispresents criticism of Israel as antisemitism. Antisemitism is a form of racist bigotry directed at Jews because they are Jews. This union campaigns vigorously against all forms of racism including antisemitism. If valid criticism of Israel is labelled as anti-Semitic then the term is undermined and debased. This is the effect of the IHRA definition which treats the state of Israel as the personification of all Jews.

Conference further notes that unfortunately the definition was adopted by the UK Government in December 1916 and has been adopted by some Local Authorities. The Labour Party NEC also adopted the definition but not the examples. A legal opinion from Hugh Tomlinson QC highlights the dangers this definition poses to the expression of free speech, (www.freespeechonisrael.org.uk/ihra-opinion/). Examples of banning meetings because of fear of being labelled anti-Semitic under the IHRA definition towards those who organise meetings to support Palestinian rights have already been seen.

Conference therefore calls on the Executive to

- a) Campaign against the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism by any organisations or public bodies, particularly trade unions;
- b) continue to support the political civil and social rights of the Palestinians;
- c) publicise the above information in NEU publications;
- d) Continue to promote free speech against injustice everywhere.