



VIA EMAIL

March 10, 2021

Adam Silver
Commissioner, NBA
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Michele Roberts
Executive Director, NBPA
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Dear Commissioner Silver and Director Roberts,

We write on behalf of StandWithUs, an international nonprofit education organization that educates about Israel and fights antisemitism, and its Center for Combating Antisemitism, whose mission is to help others to identify, define, expose, and act against antisemitism. The recent antisemitic slur used by Miami Heat center Meyers Leonard, and, perhaps equally as important, his own admission that he was unaware of the antisemitic nature of his language, presents the NBA and NBPA with the perfect opportunity to respond and join a growing number of groups, including a number of professional sports franchises, in adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA Definition), an important next step in fighting hate. Just as your organizations have been at the forefront in championing other social justice and anti-hate campaigns, including the recent joint establishment of the National Basketball Social Justice Coalition, this is your moment to loudly and unambiguously clarify that antisemitism deserves the same condemnation as racism and other forms of bigotry.

The IHRA Definition is the consensus international definition of antisemitism, not only agreed upon by the 30+ member countries of the IHRA but also adopted by numerous other government bodies, university administrations, religious and nonprofit organizations and athletic groups around the world. Developed in recognition of the rise of global antisemitism—*e.g.*, recent FBI statistics indicate that despite comprising less than 2% of the population, in 2019 Jews were the targets of 62% of all religious hate crimes, a 14% increase from the previous year—and the need to be able to identify this ever-mutating disease, the IHRA Definition rightly acknowledges the hateful nature of antisemitism and seeks to provide educational information about its many manifestations, both old and new.

In recent months, there have been far too many instances of celebrities, including professional athletes, publicly using antisemitic slurs and stereotypes. As in the case of Mr. Leonard, some of these sentiments have been expressed in ignorance of their offensive nature and the harm that results to Jews from the perpetuation of such demeaning and derogatory language. The IHRA Definition is a crucial tool in helping to clarify some of this confusion and deter future instances of antisemitism. Its adoption by the NBA and NBPA is the precise action that is needed at this time to demonstrate the seriousness with which the league and its players view this issue.

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Furthermore, as you well know, professional athletes carry a tremendous amount of influence, especially in their social media and other online activities. The adoption and championing of the IHRA Definition by the NBA and its players would allow these powerful voices an important opportunity to create a positive change by combating the normalization of antisemitism within our culture, as several current and former professional athletes are already doing, including NFL players Zach Banner, Julian Edelman and Mitchell Schwartz, NBA player Enes Kanter, and former NBA players Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Charles Barkley, and Amar'e Stoudemire.

We urge you to make the NBA the first professional athletic league in the U.S. to adopt the IHRA Definition and add its name to the growing list of athletic organizations and franchises that are taking a public stand against antisemitism, including:

Chelsea Football Club
The English Football League (EFL)
The Premier League
West Ham United Football Club
The Argentine Football Association
The Liverpool Football Club

We likewise encourage you to offer educational opportunities to NBA staff, coaches, players, and other relevant stakeholders to obtain a greater understanding of the IHRA Definition, antisemitism, and how to respond to hate within our culture. As an educational organization, StandWithUs, and its Center for Combating Antisemitism, are pleased to offer you a number of resources to support such efforts, including print and digital materials (available online at www.standwithus.com and www.standuptohatred.com), as well as customized presentations hosted by our educational experts.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to hearing from you about how we might partner with you in your efforts to advance social justice and fight hate. Given the current climate, and that now is the opportune time to take this step, we hope to hear from you by the end of the month.

With deepest appreciation,



Roz Rothstein
CEO & Co-Founder
StandWithUs



Carly F. Gammill
Director
Center for Combating Antisemitism