

Dear Legislators,

Please do not pass, adopt, or vote in favor of, or pass out of committee, bill LD 1351 An Act to Require Antisemitism to Be Considered as Motivation When Determining a Violation of a Criminal or Civil Law.

Please do not make criticism of a government and its policies criminal.

Seven of the Eleven examples of antisemitism in the definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance are making criticism of the state of Israel antisemitism. And so hence this bill if law would make criticism of the state of Israel a crime. That's totalitarian extinguishing of the free speech enshrined in the constitution and in practice though out the history of our country – a basic democratic structure, one of our founding liberties, that makes our country what it is today.

The Trump administration and those who support supremacist ideologies are already actively trying to suppress free speech and the right to peaceful protest and these attacks on free speech should not be reinforced, generated, recreated, implemented, imposed, or legalized here in Maine by the Maine Legislature.

The country is already descending into totalitarianism, with the federal government sweeping people up off the street in a reckless fashion, including legal residents, U.S. citizens, individuals of the wrong identity than who they were looking for, and deporting people whose opinions they don't like, yet these are people who have committed no crime, and whose no charges are brought against. They're deporting people with opinions they don't like!

More than 100 Israeli and international humanitarian and civil rights organizations including B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the American Civil Liberties Union, wrote urging the UN to not adopt these protocols in 2023. Their letter notes that the application of the definition has been widely criticized including by Ken Stern who, as the American Jewish Committee's antisemitism expert, led its drafting. Stern has also successfully urged the American Bar Association against adopting the definition because it has been used as “a blunt instrument to label anyone an antisemite”.

Adoption of this definition by governments and institutions has been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic. And has historically been used to target professors, students, grassroots, organizations, human rights groups, and even members of the US Congress, who either document or criticized Israeli policies or human rights violations or who speak in favor of Palestinian human rights.

This bill is a wide sweeping suppressive intimidation and tyrannization intended to squash the freedom of speech that is a founding liberty of this country. Please do not pass, vote in favor of, adopt, or move this bill out of committee.

Karl Rawstron
Portland, Maine

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LD 1351

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