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LD 1351

Dear Judiciary Committee members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to accepting or codifying any definition of antisemitism which equates criticism of Israel or of Zionism with antisemitism. As a Jewish American residing in Old Town, Maine, and who has lived in northern New England much of my adult life, I understand what antisemitism is because I have experienced it. Antisemitism is discrimination, targeting, violence, and dehumanizing stereotypes directed at Jews because they are Jewish. It is totally unacceptable for the state of Maine to determine what is or is not antisemitism through legislation that conflates this form of racism with opposition to the state of Israel.

Israel is a nation state founded in 1948, and Zionism is a political ideology promoting the state of Israel. Neither of these are synonymous with the Jewish people and neither serve to protect us. We are a diverse group of many nationalities living in diaspora across the globe, united by shared cultural and religious traditions. Many of us do not support the Israeli state at all, and feel strongly that the actions of the state of Israel make Jews much less safe worldwide.

Opposition to the political movement of Zionism and/or the policies of the state of Israel is no different from criticism of any other political ideology or policies of any other nation state and should be guaranteed under the US Constitution. No other nation state in the world is protected from criticism through legislation in this country - why should Israel be? Because its actions against the Palestinian people are so reprehensible that public sentiment in this country- and worldwide- is rising in outrage?

It is especially dangerous that this legislation has been proposed now when we see extreme targeting of members of the academic community who speak out in opposition to the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Israeli military in Gaza. Public debate over the involvement of the US in this war should be welcomed, not repressed.

As a Jewish American, I see the attempt to force me to be silent in my opposition to Israeli war crimes as antisemitic in itself. Assuming that all Jews support Israeli, and therefore falsely equating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, is stereotyping and dehumanizing. I strongly urge the Judiciary Committee to reject this dangerous legislation.

Thank you,
Daisy Goodman
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