

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the committee; my name is Anya Davidson and I am a resident of Readfield. I am writing in opposition to Bill LD1383. As a mother, a Jew, and a public health professional working in the school system, I care deeply about human rights and dignity for all. I, like most people, oppose war and would like to see a world that is safe and secure for all humankind regardless of race, religion, gender and sexual preference. While LD1383 may be well intentioned and seem to stand exactly for what I support, it is indirectly aimed at delegitimizing Israel. Although Israel is not named exclusively, it most certainly is intended. In promoting support for this bill, the Maine Voices for Palestinian Rights (a member of the Maine Coalition for Peace and Human Rights who has pushed this bill forward) state: "For the past year, activists in Maine have pursued a vote in our state legislature on a bill to divest Maine's state pension fund from companies complicit in genocide and human rights abuse. At each turn, the forces of money and Zionism have quashed the legislation..."

As indicated above, the bill is supported and promoted by an anti-Israel coalition one that denies the crimes of October 7 with some members who even justify the massacre. I have no intention of denying the horrific war that happened after the 10/7 attacks and the devastating loss of human life in Gaza. War is ugly and unfair and I wish we lived in a world where war didn't happen. Yet I wonder if this bill passes, is the state then going to divest from all companies with operations or logistics in ALL the countries who are guilty of committing serious human rights violations cited by the UN or the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, or any "credible" third-party human rights organizations as listed in this bill. To name a few, but not all of the countries that this would apply to: China, Russia, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

In addition the claim of genocide in Gaza has been made by international bodies that have a long and well documented history of bias against Israel. In fact the UN Secretary-General admitted in 2025 that Israel suffers from UN "bias" and even "discrimination." Robert Bernstein, the founder of Human Rights Watch, has strongly criticized the organization for its anti-Israel bias and I could give many more examples on the "credibility" of these organizations. Without belittling the loss of life and massive destruction that the war has caused, I must point out that in order to classify a genocide in Gaza, the international and legal definition of genocide had to be reinterpreted. The definition was too narrow since genocide

in particular is defined by intent and it couldn't be proven that Israel had intent. The International Court of Justice was asked to consider that genocide may be caused by the "probable consequence" of actions. While this may seem like semantics, it is significant to point out. Especially since there was genocidal intent against Israel on 10/7 and that has been clearly expressed by Hamas leaders and is written in their charter.

We are amidst an immense surge in antisemitism and while many of these acts may be labeled anti-Israel or anti-zionist in nature we must acknowledge the overlap and fact that this surge in hatred against Israel causes immense consequences for Jews around the world. This Monday we recognized Martin Luther King Jr and his legacy of equality and justice for all. MLK Jr. was a strong supporter of Israel and an ally to the Jewish community, he fought against antisemitism along with racism. Many Jewish leaders, like Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, marched alongside him during the civil rights movement. Yet, this past weekend, at a MLK Jr. commemoration event called an "All Peoples Celebration" in San Diego- a local Rabbi was disinvited. When he asked why, they said it was because of his Zionist views. The Rabbi asked if another Rabbi could speak in his place but they wouldn't let anyone else. As a result no Jewish Clergy were allowed at this "All People's celebration" honoring MLK Jr where they have traditionally offered a benediction.

The children in Israel and Gaza deserve to be safe and live in a world where they can play, learn, and grow up without fear. Our children in Maine and the United States also deserve this. As a person working in the school system and in healthcare I see what our children deal with on a day to day basis. While thankfully it is not war, it is food and housing insecurity, lack of healthcare, and so much more. We cannot expect children to learn when their basic needs aren't being met. We have many who are falling between the cracks because their parents' income doesn't qualify them for MaineCare or Snap benefits. We need to focus on local issues that are relevant to our Maine families because there is so much broken right here. We are losing funding in public health and our schools, funding that is desperately needed to educate our children and help them to grow up healthy and supported. Please don't waste valuable local resources and time on issues that are beyond our reach and meant to be dealt with at a federal level.

- "The Double Standard in the Human Rights World"
- According to Danielle Haas, former Senior Editor at Human Rights Watch (HRW), the group's work, "frequently violated basic editorial standards related to rigor, balance, and collegiality, when it comes to Israel."
- 7 Problems With the UN Human Rights Council, which is "obsessed with demonizing Israel" while adopting zero resolutions for the "gross human rights abuses" perpetrated in Algeria, China, Cuba, Egypt, Gaza, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Zimbabwe, and many other countries.