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LD 1351

My name is Rachel Statham and I live in Winthrop, ME. I held various librarian positions for 10 years with a degree in library and information science from Simmons College.

I have been publicly outspoken against antisemitism in the past. It is real and insidious, and as a librarian, I have done my best to discredit disinformation surrounding the Holocaust for years. However, when defining what antisemitism is, using the IHRA definition, which two times references criticizing the Israel government as antisemitic, is a tactic to squash current protests against state policies and military action enacted by Israel and the U.S.

Equating the actions of the Israel, a government that enforces apartheid law, with all Jewish people, is dangerous. It unfairly says that a small minority represents a global population--as if the Iranian government represented all Muslims or the Westboro of Baptist Church spoke for all southern Baptists. These governments and institutions do not embody the values of everyone in a general population--the same way Donald Trump's administration and many before his doesn't speak for me and many Mainers (which was apparent just this weekend at several Hands Off rallies across the state).

All people, regardless of skin color, sexuality, religion, and so forth, should have the right to self-determination. This includes Jewish and Palestinian people. In America, we try to accomplish this through elections and representative governments. They are not perfect, but our First Amendment allows us to criticize the government. In Israel, this is also the case for some of its citizens, but not all of them. True, this right of American only specifies only our own government, but why would it not protect us against speaking out about Russia when it's government arrests journalist and commits war crimes?

That is why I am asking you all to oppose this bill, LD 1351 sponsored by Sen. Abigail Griffin. Thank you for your time.