



**Council on American-Islamic Relations**  
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## **Oppose Limits on Free Speech & Boycotts Reject the Israel Anti-Boycott Act**

### **ISSUE**

Introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Rob Portman (R-OH), and in the U.S. House by Representatives Juan Vargas (D-CA), Lee Zeldin (R-NY) and Brad Sherman (D-CA), the Israel Anti-Boycott Act (S. 720 / H.R.1697) is unconstitutional and infringes on the free speech rights of all Americans.

The act would criminalize American business owners and individuals supporting any international boycott directed by the United Nations, the European Union or any other international governmental organization that is aimed at Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine territories with criminal penalties resulting in up to 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine.

Responding to public backlash over the bill curbing the free speech rights of Americans, Senator Cardin has stated that he is open to amending the legislation and other congressional co-sponsors are now re-examining their support for the act.

However, CAIR believes that no amendment can be offered to fix the legislation's true purpose – to intimidate Americans from supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine territories. CAIR believes that American involvement in foreign boycotts started with throwing tea in Boston Harbor.

### **ACTION CONGRESS MUST TAKE**

Members of Congress are being asked to refrain from co-sponsoring the Israel Anti-Boycott Act and, if they are already a co-sponsor, to reexamine their support of the act and oppose the advancement of the act. Even if amended, the act should be rejected as its primary purpose is to obstruct the First Amendment rights of Americans to engage in political speech and foreign boycotts.

### **REASONS NOT TO SUPPORT THE ISRAEL ANTI-BOYCOTT ACT**

- It is un-American and unconstitutional for the U.S. Government to deny U.S. businesses and persons the right to work to change the illegal and discriminatory actions of a foreign government.
- The act would enable the U.S. government to pressure or criminalize the growing number of businesses, major church denominations, charitable foundations, university student governments, labor unions, and investors that have called to boycott or take other economic measures against companies and institutions complicit in Israel's human rights abuses.
- Although CAIR does not actively support or oppose the movement to boycott those Israeli government and business entities that operate illegally in occupied territories, we recognize that the right to boycott is an integral part of both free speech and the American political process.
- Indeed, boycotts such as the Montgomery Bus boycott against segregation and the boycott of companies enabling South African Apartheid have long been successfully employed in support of civil and human rights here and abroad.

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