

Bill: HB1124 “Not on Our Dime Act”

FAV

I am writing to support HB1124 “Not on Our Dime Act”; I support prohibiting Maryland non-profit organizations from sending tax-free funds to Israeli settlements.

Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank, including Occupied East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law (Geneva 4th Convention) and have recently been deemed illegal by President Biden. Israeli settlements have for decades been tools of displacement and brutality against the Palestinian population native to these lands. Daniella Weiss, former mayor of the illegal Israeli settlement Kedumim in the Occupied West Bank, has made numerous statements advocating for ethnic cleansing, recently stating that the US should not expect Israel to stop fighting in Gaza, as Israel will resettle the entire area (after an implied ethnic cleansing). Weiss in 2023 asserted that the world wants to think there is an option for a Palestinian state and by continuing to build illegal Israeli settlements, Israel is “clos[ing] ..the option for a Palestinian state” (New Yorker, 2023).

Amnesty International (2023) asserts that “[Israeli] state-backed settler violence is endemic to the West Bank”. In 2022 Bezalel Smotrich, a settler and now the Finance Minister in the Netanyahu administration, said that a Palestinian village in the Occupied West Bank, Huwara, “should be ‘wiped off the earth’ by Israel” (Amnesty International 2023).

I spent months in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza in the 1990s, and I saw the degree to which settlers were armed with assault rifles; Israeli settlers have only become further emboldened and violent in the years since. Settler violence against Palestinians has been continuing with impunity for decades, with settlers rarely incurring legal consequences for injury or murder of Palestinians (Amnesty International 2023).

The purpose behind non-profit organizations is that they exist for public good; their tax-exempt status is intended to facilitate this. It's important to note that HB1124 does not prohibit the citizens of Maryland from sending money to Israeli settlements; rather it prohibits tax-exempt funds from funding settlements and settlement activity. This bill will help ensure that Maryland non-profits act in accordance with their purpose. The only ethical stance is to prohibit tax-exempt funds from aiding and abetting the violation of international law, and the slaughter, the displacement, and expulsion of Palestinians.

Person submitting:

Diane Carpenter
8417 Magruder Mill Court
Bethesda, MD 20817