

TESTIMONY REGARDING HOUSE BILL 1124: UNFAVORABLE

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For a host of reasons, HB1124 should be rejected:

(1) HB1124 is a one-sided attack on Israel-oriented charities.

While imposing sanctions upon charities which support Israeli settlements, HB1124 completely ignores the far more disturbing support that numerous non-profits provide to Islamic extremists. A November, 2023 investigation by “Focus on Western Islamism” uncovered over \$260 million sent through the 501(c) system to Hamas-aligned charities in the United States. These Hamas-aligned charities include Rahma Worldwide, Reach Education Fund, Baitulmaal, Islamic Relief, LIFE for Relief and Development, Zakat Foundation of America, Helping Hand for Relief and Development, American Near East Refugee Aid, United Mission for Relief & Development, Muslim Aid, Mercy-USA, American Muslims for Palestine, Palestine Children’s Relief Fund, Pious Projects of America, Heroic Hearts, United Hands Relief, and Human Appeal.

(<https://islamism.news/research/investigations/revealed-the-funding-behind-the-u-s-charitable-network-that-subsidizes-hamas/>).

(2) HB1124 is based upon a contested premise regarding the West Bank.

The underlying concept of HB1124, namely, that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank violates international law, is false. “Israel has a well-founded claim that the West Bank are not ‘occupied territories’ under international law, since they were not taken from any foreign sovereign power.”

(www.jcpa.org/article/status-of-settlements-in-international-law).

To quote Professor Eugene Kontorovich of the George Mason University Scalia Law School: “Under international law, occupation occurs when a country takes over the sovereign territory of another country. But the West Bank was never part of Jordan, which seized it in 1949 and ethnically cleansed its entire Jewish population. Nor was it ever the site of an Arab Palestinian state. Moreover, a country cannot occupy territory to which it has sovereign title, and Israel has the strongest claim to the land.

International law holds that a new country inherits the borders of the prior

geopolitical unit in that territory. Israel was preceded by the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, whose borders included the West Bank.”

(3) HB1124 ignores the primary source of West Bank violence and terror.

HB1124 assumes that the primary problem in the West Bank is “settler” violence, and not Palestinian terrorism. In actuality, thousands of terrorist attacks were committed against Israel in the West Bank in 2023, and 608 of those attacks ended with wounded or dead Israelis. Half of the 608 attacks were shooting attacks, which is the highest number recorded since the Second Intifada from 2000 to 2005.

(www.israelnationalnews.com/news/385554).

The overwhelming majority of Israelis residing in the West Bank are law-abiding and peaceful, and legislative initiatives like HB1124 which imply otherwise are slanderous elements of the global campaign to demonize and isolate Israel.

(4) HB1124 intrudes upon an issue that is being addressed on the federal level.

The Biden Administration has taken action against the small number of Israelis who engage in violent behavior in the West Bank by the State of Maryland on a foreign policy issue that is being addressed on a federal level. On February 1, 2024, President Biden signed an executive order authorizing him to implement new measures to combat settler violence, and concurrently imposed sanctions against four Israeli extremists. The sanctions blocks these individuals from access to the U.S. financial system; freezes their assets in the U.S.; and bars their entry into the U.S. *(www.timesofisrael.com/with-unprecedented-executive-order-us-sanctions-settlers-behind-intolerable-violence/)*. The State of Maryland should defer to the action taken by federal authorities to address this issue.

(5) HB1124 is overly broad in its scope.

As noted in a letter issued by 24 New York legislators opposed to a similar bill introduced into the New York State Assembly, the legislation at issue would extend to “Jewish organizations that have wide-ranging missions from feeding the poor to providing emergency medical care for victims of

terrorism to clothing orphans.” The legislators correctly characterized the bill as “a ploy to demonize Jewish charities with connections to Israel.” The charity most prominently cited by the “Not on Our Dime” website (the organization behind legislative initiatives like HB1124) is the Central Fund of Israel, which gives money to Israeli organizations whose missions range from providing living assistance for Holocaust survivors to helping Ethiopian-Israeli youth.

(www.algemeiner.com/2023/05/18/majority-of-new-york-state-assembly-democrats-condemn-bill-targeting-pro-Israel-charities).