

TESTIMONY REGARDING HOUSE BILL 763: FAVORABLE

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Today, Maryland's Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention includes an individual and organization whose public responses to the massacre perpetrated by Hamas on October 7 betrayed the attitudes and perspectives that the Commission is charged with combating. HB763 addresses this troubling situation by removing the spot reserved for a representative of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and replacing it with two representatives of the Muslim community.

In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 massacre, the CAIR representative on the Commission, Zainab Chaudry, posted the following comments on Facebook:

On October 17, Ms. Chaudry wrote, "[T]hat moment when you become what you hated most," accompanied by photos of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin lit up with the Israeli flag in solidarity with Israel following the Hamas massacre of October 7, and a photo of the Gate in 1936 decorated with the Nazi flag.

On October 26, Ms. Chaudry wrote, "I will never be able to understand how the world summoned up rage for 40 fake Israeli babies while completely turning a blind eye to 3,000 real Palestinian babies."

On November 6, Ms. Chaudry suggested that the mere existence of Israel was the cause of the current conflict, calling Israel an "inconvenient fact," and including an image of the words "it all started in 1948," the year Israel was founded.

When reached for comment about these remarks, Ms. Chaudry doubled-down on her defamation of the State of Israel, telling Fox News that she condemns Israel's "racist government" for "genocidal war crimes" and for making "genocidal threats towards the Palestinian people and killing over 13,000 Palestinians in Gaza, most of them women and children murdered in their homes."

As for CAIR, this past December, the White House disavowed the

organization after its national executive director, Nihad Awad, declared that he “was happy to see” Palestinians break out of Gaza on Oct. 7, the day of the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel that killed an estimated 1,200 people and led to the seizure of 240 others as hostages, and that Palestinians in Gaza “have the right to self-defense” but that Israel “as an occupying power” does not. The troubling history of CAIR is well documented; as noted by the ADL, “While ostensibly focused on responding to the proliferation of anti-Muslim incidents and sentiment nationwide, key CAIR leaders often traffic in antisemitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric. In fact, some of its leaders have cultivated suspicion among the public toward a wide array of American Jewish institutions.” (<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/council-american-islamic-relations-cair>).

While CAIR and Ms. Chaudry have every right to express their noxious opinions, their vitriol against Israel disqualify them from serving on a Commission whose purpose is to "communicate and promote understanding of diverse perspectives in a positive and meaningful way." Their presence on the Commission makes a mockery of the Commission's lofty goals, and is an insult to Maryland's Jewish community, and to all people of good will.

By removing CAIR from the Commission, HB763 is a positive step towards restoring the moral authority of the Commission. Together with HB809, which confers upon the AG the authority to remove Commission members for good cause, HB763 will help ensure that promoters of hate and divisiveness are not part of a body that combats these evils. I therefore urge the General Assembly to enact HB763.