

Hiruy Hadgu
Testimony on HB0763
Unfavorable

Members of the Committee,

I am testifying to express my vehement opposition to House Bill 0763, which aims to unjustly remove the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) from the Maryland Attorney General's Hate Crimes Commission.

CAIR is the nation's largest Muslim civil rights organization, with a venerable history of defending the rights of Muslim Americans. The organization has been at the forefront of empowering not just mosques but also churches and synagogues, fighting against the surge of hate crimes that has unfortunately become all too common in our society.

I am appalled by the Bill's sponsors and the State Delegations Zionist Caucus' push to continue to silence critics of Apartheid Israel and its genocidal crimes. Instead of expressing collective outrage against Israel's war crimes, the Zionist Caucus seeks to employ fascist tactics to crack down on dissent.

The bill in question is a direct retaliation against CAIR's advocacy for Palestinian Christians and Muslims, a continuation of efforts from last fall that failed to undermine CAIR's legitimate and necessary work. CAIR's Maryland director, Zainab Chaudry, has been recognized for her tireless efforts in combatting hate and fostering interfaith harmony.

The sponsors of House Bill 0763 have remained disturbingly silent on the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian sentiments. Instead of addressing these pressing issues, they have chosen to target an organization that provides a crucial voice for the Muslim community. This bill is not just an attempt to remove CAIR; it is an attempt to silence a significant portion of our community and to suggest that the rights and representations of Muslim and Palestinian voices are negotiable.

In a time when CAIR's Maryland office reported a worrying number of incidents and hate bias complaints, the message sent by this bill is clear and dangerous: it attempts to normalize the marginalization of Muslims and Palestinians, and it undermines the integrity of the Hate Crimes Commission itself.

I urge you to review the actions and public statements of the bill's sponsors critically. Do they reflect a commitment to all constituents and a condemnation of all forms of hate?

With this in mind, I call upon you to uphold the values of representation, justice, and inclusivity by maintaining CAIR's deserved place on the Hate Crimes Commission. Oppose House Bill 0763 and ensure that our state's response to hate crimes remains robust, fair, and representative of all communities.

Zionism is terrorism. Zionism is fascism. Oppose fascism because this has no place in our state. Vote against this bill. If we don't stop Zionism now, if we agree to punish and crack down on dissent today because of legitimate criticisms against Israel, what's next? This is a slipper slope and I urge you to reject it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.