



HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

HOUSE BILL 763

COMMISSION ON HATE CRIME RESPONSE AND PREVENTION - MEMBERSHIP - ALTERATIONS SUPPORT

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office for Agudath Israel of America – a renowned national Jewish advocacy organization with chapters across the country, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland.

In the wake of the shock and horror experienced by Marylanders upon hearing of the barbarous acts committed by Hamas and its allies against innocent civilians of Israeli and other citizenships, and in the wake of the pain and sorrow felt at the deaths of innocent Gazans caught up in the subsequent Israeli incursion into Gaza, it is all the more clear that we must ensure that the Jewish, Muslim, and other various faith and cultural communities of Maryland focus on preserving mutual peace, tolerance, and respect. The role of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention is therefore all-the-more important. For that very reason, it is imperative that the organizations sitting on the Commission themselves be organizations that emphasize tolerance and respect.

It is extremely unfortunate that public statements made by the Council on America-Islamic Relations (CAIR) fail to meet this imperative, and therefore render it a completely inappropriate representative of the broader Muslim community. Statements by CAIR’s national executive director glorifying the massacre of October 7th, and embracing the antisemitic conspiracy that a shadowy cabal of Jewish Americans secretly control the United States government and the United States Congress and have sold the soul of America¹, were extreme enough to draw a strong disavowal from the Biden Administration, which released a statement condemning “these shocking, Antisemitic statements in the strongest terms.”²

Here in Maryland, CAIR’s Maryland chapter director and CAIR representative to the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention moved far beyond criticism of Israel and

¹ <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/nihad-awad-council-american-islamic-relations-israel-gaza-terror-attacks/>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/08/politics/white-house-cair-leader/index.html>

into the cesspool of atrocity denial³ and refused to apologize for denying the brutal acts of Hamas.⁴

We would not advocate for removing a person or a group from their seat on the commission because of their political stance on the Israel-Hamas conflict, no matter how deeply we might disagree with their views. When their public stances morph into atrocity denial and antisemitic tropes, however, their participation in the commission becomes farcical. The Muslim community, as well as all other faith and cultural communities, are far-better served by organizations and individuals who teach tolerance, not hate. For this reason, we request a favorable report on House Bill 763.

³ <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/politics-power/state-government/zainab-chaudry-anthony-brown-maryland-commission-on-hate-crimes-V27CRZWEWFG3JCQNTDWFCQBZGM/>

⁴ On that note, see the testimony of Eli Beer, head of Israel's EMS service:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Drr9zTvK4Os&ab_channel=HowardMortman.