

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony here today to express my strong support for House Bill 1394, which seeks to prohibit organizations from aiding and abetting activities by the government of Israel or its citizens that violate international law in occupied territories.

For the past 16 months, I have had to watch the genocide of the Palestinian people unfold before my eyes. I watched as Israeli Defense forces raided al-Shifa hospital and murdered hundreds of innocent people. I heard news of 6 year old hind rajab being trapped in a vehicle with 6 murdered family members while sitting in class. I listened to my own community grieve the loss of their family for months. And the State of Maryland was complicit in murdering the families of its own students.

This bill is crucial in holding organizations in Maryland ethically responsible. By ensuring that these organizations do not engage in unauthorized support of Israeli settlement activities, we take a firm stand against practices that have been widely recognized as contrary to the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The expansion of settlements in the occupied territories not only undermines peace efforts but also has devastating effects on the lives of countless individuals, both Palestinian and Israeli. These settlements often lead to forced evictions, acts of violence, and the destruction of homes and livelihoods. As a state that values justice, equity, and human dignity, Maryland must not tolerate the complicity of our nonprofit organizations in these actions.

House Bill 1394 empowers the Attorney General to enforce this prohibition, ensuring that any organization that violates the terms of this act can be held accountable. This provision is vital; it provides a mechanism for the state to act decisively against those who engage in activities that facilitate human rights violations. Additionally, the bill protects the integrity of charitable organizations in Maryland by ensuring that donations are used in ways that align with our values and principles.

Furthermore, this legislation aligns with international norms and the commitments made by the United States under various treaties, including the Geneva Conventions. By enacting this bill, Maryland takes a proactive step in promoting international law and standing against actions that are widely condemned by the global community.

I urge you to consider the moral and ethical implications of this legislation. Supporting House Bill 1394 is not just about legal compliance; it is about standing for justice and ensuring that our state does not inadvertently support actions that violate the rights of protected persons under international law.

In conclusion, I strongly support House Bill 1394 and encourage this committee to advance it without delay. Together, we can ensure that Maryland leads by example in promoting human rights and accountability in our nonprofit sector.

Thank you for your time and consideration.