

Testimony Submission - Kansas House Bill 2299

Personal Information

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Bill Information

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

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Written Testimony

"As the largest anti-Zionist Jewish organization in the world, we unequivocally reject the conflation of antisemitism with anti zionism and reaffirm in the strongest terms that there is no place for antisemitism in our movements. We condemn the false accusations of antisemitism leveled against principled, anti-war protesters to discredit our movements" - [Jewish Voice For Peace, April 2024](#).

I am disappointed to learn of the introduction of HB 2299 which would conflate anti zionism to antisemitism, and in so doing, restrict Kansans' right to free speech. The [First Amendment](#) states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; **or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**"

Introducing HB2299 would interfere with a Kansans' right to protest the state of Israel, and the ways in which their tax dollars contribute to a large-scale military offensive and occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. The [International Court of Justice](#) ruled in July of 2024 that the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian territories is unlawful and goes against International Law. HB2299 would prevent the right of the students and people of Kansas to support this ruling and criticize the State of Israel for its unlawful actions. Conflating Antisemitism with Anti Zionism would in itself be anti semitic, as Jerry Nadler the most senior Jewish member of the US House of Representatives pointed out in his [testimony](#) regarding HR894 - a similar resolution to HB2299. He stated "If [the authors] were at all familiar with Jewish history and culture, should know about Jewish anti-Zionism that was and is

expressly not antisemitic” and goes on to say that the measure “ignores certain Hasidic communities, progressive Jewish groups, and others that have held views that are at odds with modern Zionist conception” ([The Independent](#)). While I am fully in support of efforts to decrease antisemitism in the United States, I find it entirely unhelpful to take away the people’s ability to protest the unlawful occupation and increasingly likely genocide and ethnic cleansing that has occurred in Palestine over the [last seven decades](#). The death toll of the recent escalation of violence, lasting over fifteen months and with [periodic violence still occurring in spite of the ceasefire](#), is ever rising from the most recently estimated 61,709 deaths ([Al Jazeera](#)). At least 17,492 children were killed, and over 14,000 Palestinians are confirmed to still be missing, though experts from [the Lancet](#) estimate that the true death toll may be in the hundreds of thousands. There is no reason that the people of Kansas should not be able to criticize Israel’s treatment of Palestinians or call for accountability. There are countless stories of brutal violence committed by Israeli soldiers: ranging from 24 year old [Rachel Corrie’s death](#) in 2003 after she was run over by an Israeli bulldozer, [Shireen Abu Akleh](#), a Palestinian-American journalist killed while on assignment in the occupied West Bank, and the devastating story of [Hind Rajab](#): a six year old Palestinian girl who was killed trying to follow evacuation orders with her family. Al Jazeera’s Fault Lines and [Forensic Architecture’s](#) reports show that Israeli tanks were at close enough range that they could have seen that they were shooting at children, and yet over 330 bullets were shot at the car Hind and her four cousins were trapped in. Hind witnessed the deaths of her Uncle, Aunt, and cousins and sustained bullet wounds herself in the initial fire upon the car. She then spent over three hours speaking with members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Services (PRCS), who coordinated with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to secure a route for an ambulance to evacuate the child. However, when the ambulance and two paramedics were within sight of the car Hind was trapped in, they were blown to pieces by an Israeli tank. The PRCS team and Hind’s mother listened as the ambulance was destroyed and Hind uttered her last words before she bled out. There is absolutely no reason that the people of Kansas should not be able to protest such a gruesome and agonizing death of a child. There is no reason that the members of the IDF, or the State of Israel itself, should not face repercussions and take accountability for the unspeakable [war crimes](#) committed on the night of Hind’s death and the unlawful deaths of other children, medical workers, and journalists over the last 20+ years. In summary, this resolution interferes with Kansan’s right to free speech and is a targeted attempt to hinder criticism of the state of Israel. Similar to HR 894, it is unethical to “prohibit” antisemitism by conflating it with Anti Zionism, but do nothing to prohibit rising instances of Islamophobia in the United States. It is reprehensible to forbid any negative statements on Zionism in the United States, but allow statements such as US Rep Max Miller’s statement after introducing HR 894 which stated that he refuses to “call it the Palestinian flag because they’re not a state, they’re a territory that’s about to **probably get eviscerated and go away here shortly, as we’re going to turn that into a parking lot**” ([The Independent](#)). There are over 2 million people living in Gaza, many of whom have familial ties to those who have fled to other countries, including the United States. It is completely unacceptable to blatantly call for the removal and/or deaths of 2 million people, and tell the people in opposition to this that they are not allowed to speak out or protest, especially when their tax dollars are used to facilitate the “evisceration”. In November of 2024 the [Council on American-Islamic Relations \(CAIR\)](#) stated that in a report “based on survey responses from 720 students at 87 public and private colleges and universities during the 2023-2024 academic year, reveals that nearly 50% of Muslim students experienced harassment or discrimination on campus—a significant increase from 40% reported in CAIR-CA’s 2020 report. The findings also highlight how the October 7, 2023, attacks and the subsequent genocide in Gaza exacerbated Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian hate, and anti-Arab racism, leaving Muslim students feeling targeted

and unsupported.” HB2299 would leave Palestinian-American students on Kansas college campuses feeling even less supported. In addition, insinuations that campus protests, and other non-campus protests, are violent and full of antisemitism are illegitimate and misleading. In May of 2024 the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) found that “between 7 October and 3 May, the overwhelming majority of student demonstrations — 97% — have remained peaceful” ([ACLED](#)). Protests are often guided and well attended by Jewish individuals, often associated with Jewish Voice for Peace, an organization which has been advocating against the dangerous conflation of Anti Zionism with antisemitism since at least 2021 when they published a document entitled “Dismantle Antisemitism, Not Palestinian Rights: Oppose the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism.” This document states that “The controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism does not make Jewish people safer, but it does threaten Palestinian rights advocates, and free speech. By design, the IHRA definition’s focus on branding criticism of Israel as antisemitic makes it a tool to silence Palestinians and shield the Israeli government from accountability” (“[Dismantle Antisemitism, Not Palestinian Rights: Oppose the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism](#).”) HB2299 would restrict Kansans’ from utilizing their First Amendment Right to speak out against injustice and stand up for the vulnerable and must not be allowed to pass.

Signature

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