

Testimony in Opposition to HB 476  
Ohio General Assembly - House of Representatives  
Committee on Government Accountability & Oversight  
May 3, 2016 - Columbus, Ohio

Chairman Brown, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde, and Members of the Committee:

I. Background and Statement of Interest

I thank you for this opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Dustyann Tyukody. I am a retired business professional living in Toledo, Ohio. Motivated by several conversations with members of the Jewish Federation of Toledo in 2012 I took it upon myself to travel to Palestine where I spent two weeks in the West Bank in the summer of 2013. I am here as a witness to what I saw & experienced and to give facts of the ongoing oppression of Palestinians. It is this sustained brutality and injustice for more than 60 years that has given rise to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign I support and defend.

II. Specific Brutalities

A. Restriction of Movement (picture) - There are 96 fixed checkpoints of which 57 are internal, located within the West Bank of Palestine. So for most Palestinians, like these being herded like cattle, carrying out everyday activities such as going to work or school, marketing farm produce, getting medical care or visiting relatives is a daily trial. While we watched Palestinians suffer these abuses, we non-Palestinians could easily pass through checkpoints no worse for wear.

B. Betar Illit Settlement (picture) - One of at least 125 government-sanctioned illegal settlements, it was established in 1985 and has roughly 45,000 inhabitants. The Israeli government expects the size of Betar Illit to expand, taking more Palestinian-owned land to house a total of 100,000 illegal settlers.

C. Wadi Foquin (picture) - One of my most interesting pictures, this one portrays a farmer with his some of his sapling olive trees. Missing

from the picture are the olive trees that the Israeli government bulldozed down because they would be a security problem for Betar Illit in the background. These saplings have also been ordered to be torn out because of their menacing existence. Wadi Foquin is a small Palestinian village of 1200 whose size and population has shrunk because of the illegal encroachment from settlers. Adding insult to humiliation for the Wadi Foquin residents, the Betar Illit settlement dumps their raw sewage down the hill toward the village, making some of its farming soil worthless and dangerous to humans and cattle alike.

D. Jayyous (picture) - this is a small village about 3 miles from the 1967 Israeli border and is home to farmers who, for generations have worked their fields on the outskirts of town. On our tour of the town and its surrounds I took this picture, approaching the security barrier that the Israeli government has erected within the West Bank, dividing Jayyous in half. The barrier is locked and manned so farmers can only get to their crops at certain times of the day and on Jewish holidays, not at all. This barrier prohibits Palestinians from being economically self-sufficient, relying on humanitarian assistance to survive.

E. Jahalin Bedouin Tribe (picture) - part of the 5 tribes of the Negev Bedouin, they had to seek refuge in the West Bank in the early 1950's. In 2010 this particular tribe was forcibly relocated to this site outside of the Ma'aleh Adumim settlement in the background. Because the Bedouin, like the Palestinians in most of the West Bank, are prohibited by the Israeli government from buying construction materials, the Jahalin must scavenge for materials to make their homes. Scavenge. The Jahalin treated us to a lovely but simple lunch while we were there.

F. Hebron City Center Souk (picture) - due to the influx of Israeli settlements (of the most radical type) in Hebron, many Palestinian businesses suffered and had to close. Almost 77% of all such establishments in the area were affected. Result: major unemployment. Those that remained in the old town marketplace are humiliated and harassed by settlers living in the apartments above as they throw urine, dirty water, sewage and raw sewage down upon the marketplace street. The netting is there to mitigate some of the crap.

I encourage everyone here today to travel to Palestine and the West Bank - if you are of a strong and compassionate heart. I have witnessed forceable relocation, theft of land, systematic infringement against civil, social, economic and cultural rights, segregation, institutionalized discrimination and, dare I say, apartheid. The BDS movement began in 2005, 57 years after the Occupation began. The Palestinians waited long enough for other countries to do something to help alleviate their suffering and oppression. BDS is a non-violent movement that applauds every country's government, corporations, schools, NGO's, financial instruments and every man, woman and child participation to move Israel to change its apartheid behaviors. With what I have witnessed in Palestine I oppose HB 476 in the strongest terms.

Dustyann Tyukody