

Testimony in Opposition to H.B. 476
Ohio House of Representatives
Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight
May 3, 2016

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

I am Eric Resnick. I am from Canton. I am Jewish. I am very proud to be here today in opposition to H.B. 476, which politely, is about suppressing and punishing behavior that is protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the right to engage in non-violent protest against a government behaving badly. Hence, despite what you may have heard, H.B. 476 is neither aligned with the fundamental principles of Judaism, nor the United States.

Bluntly, this should more accurately be called the "Defense of Ethnic Cleansing Act," a lame duck silly season bill that is ridiculously unenforceable and blatantly unconstitutional, pandering, and should be laughed out of the Statehouse on merit and politics.

More importantly, it is offensive.

This is an attempt to use the power of the State of Ohio to silence those who seek justice for Palestinians, and who want Israel to end its abusive occupation and Apartheid, and be held accountable for ethnic cleansing. Should you enact this bill, shame on you. History will judge you as it does those who aided and abetted the South African National Party, the Bosnian Serbs, and the Hutu extremists in Rwanda.

The unanimously adopted 1992 U.N. Security Council Resolution 780 defines ethnic cleansing as "a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas."

That is exactly what is happening in Gaza and the West Bank, and now the Golan, the territories Israel brutally and militarily occupies, every day.

Radovan Karadžić was just convicted of ethnic cleansing in the International Criminal Court under this resolution. What's the difference between what he did and what Israel does? There are two. The first is speed. Karadžić was faster, or maybe he just hit resistance sooner. The second is the Israel Lobby – those political actors, who, under the false flag of Judaism, tell people like you that Israel is untouchable, above international law, beyond scrutiny, and always a victim.

Judaism is a religion. Israel is a sovereign nation governed by its internal politics and international law. Zionism is a political movement that is violent, criminal, and corrupt. The Israel Lobby is the U.S. lobbying arm of Zionism. There are actually more Christian Zionists than Jewish ones.

Zionism is not Judaism. Real Jews reject Zionism. There is nothing anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic about criticizing Israel. Let me say that again; Rejection of Zionism and criticizing Israel's crimes are not anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic.

Last week you heard Howie Beigelman, misrepresent himself. Beigelman represents the Israel Lobby, not "Ohio's Jewish Community."

Beigelman's Israel Lobby is opposed by BDS sponsor **Jewish Voice for Peace** jewishvoiceforpeace.org, and **Neturei Karta** www.nkusa.org, who are Orthodox Jews opposed to Zionism and supporters of Palestine, the growing numbers of American Jews starting to question the Israel Lobby, and American Jewish Youth, who, as detailed by the Pew Poll, have different,

more critical views on Israel than their grandparents. Howie Beigelman and the Israel Lobby don't speak for me.

There's a Rabbinical principle called *Ma'arat Ayin*, which means avoiding even the *appearance* of violation of a law. We see this play out, for example, in ruling non-dairy coffee creamer unsuitable and not kosher to be eaten with meat, even though it is made of soy, and is non-dairy. Soy, of course, is kosher with both meat and milk. But *Ma'arat Ayin* flips logic on its head in favor of "appearance." While that logic may have been useful in the Middle Ages, the more contemporary response is the Yiddish term *bobe mayce*, which means fairy tale, or more bluntly, that which falls out of the back of a male cow.

Those you heard from last week want you to buy the *bobe mayce* that criticism of Israel in the form of boycott, divestment and sanction has the appearance of being tantamount to an anti-Jewish hate crime, and as such, it must be. Further, they tell you that you must act to silence those exercising their First Amendment rights, because Israel, and its ability to commit crimes against humanity, is special and necessary.

It is particularly troubling to witness a Zionist pastor, Juan Rivera, put business and economic interests above human decency and basic needs.

They told you that BDS "delegitimizes Israel's existence." *Bobe mayce!* What delegitimizes Israel is Israel's behavior, not those who want it changed.

They told you that BDS "is a platform to tell an anti-Israel story that smacks of anti-Semitism," but it isn't. That's *Ma'arat Ayin*.

They told you H.B. 476 "serves a vital state interest." Huh?

They told you BDS would take away your laptop computers and your cell phones. Baloney! Kosher Baloney!

They told you Ohio is a "great leader" in promotion of justice and non-discrimination, and this bill is just a logical next step. As a gay man, if that statement were not so absurd, I might find it funny.

But to me, the most disturbing testimony from the Israel Lobby is that which subverts all sense of justice and humanity, by telling you that the ones who will be the most hurt by BDS are Palestinians. If that all sounds eerily familiar, it is. Google the phrases, and you get articles that nearly word for word were used to defend Apartheid and keep black South Africans oppressed.

No one buys that *bobe mayce* anymore, nor should they. It was wrongheaded then, and it is wrongheaded now.

To go one step further, the Israel Lobby is disingenuous in its condemnation of BDS as a tactic. American Jewry, including organizations that comprise the Israel Lobby, were all in favor of BDS when it was used against South Africa. And it is also appropriate to note that Nelson Mandela was a staunch supporter of BDS on Israel, and said numerous times that Apartheid in Israel is worse than Apartheid in South Africa because it is more violent.

Attached to this testimony as an exhibit is a copy of the BDS resolution adopted in 1987 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis – the Reform Jewish Movement. Other resolutions are online, but I exhibit this one because of its completeness, and its moral clarity.

It calls for the U.S. government to ban South African imports, to boycott firms that do business in South Africa, to reduce the level of diplomatic recognition of South Africa, and for congregations

to support those South Africans engaged in non-violent resistance of Apartheid. In other words, a full-throated endorsement and urgent call to BDS.

They supported BDS in Rwanda, Sudan, and Bosnia, too.

But when the target is Israel, however, their tune changes. This is not a skit on the *Daily Show*. They are seriously asking you to make the state of Ohio complicit in their support of ethnic cleansing, and their hypocrisy.

Testimony today is not a pleasurable experience for me. I am ashamed of these people. As a member of the Jewish tribe, I am not supposed to cross this line. I am supposed to be one of the Israel Lobby lemmings. It is assumed, and that's one of the reasons why they are successful. Don't fall for it. I am not alone in my views. Our numbers are growing, which is what they fear most.

Finally, I want to ask you to dismiss the notion that this bill is supported by religious folks.

BDS is passionate non-violent action for justice and for change. BDS is supported by resolutions passed by a growing number of denominations you have probably heard of; The Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Quakers, the United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalists, and the World Council of Churches.

For all those reasons, and because it is right, I ask that you have the moral clarity and strength to, in the name of humanity, oppose this bill.

I will gladly answer questions.

EXHIBIT

Resolution Adopted by the CCAR

South Africa

Adopted by the CCAR at the 98th Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis 1987

WHEREAS our prophets and rabbis taught that all human beings are created in the image of God and have an equal claim to equity and justice, and

WHEREAS the Jewish religious tradition and historical experience equate racism with ultimate evil, and

WHEREAS Reform Judaism, throughout its history, has spoken with vigor and clarity against racial segregation and discrimination in the United States and the world, and

WHEREAS South Africa is the only country in the modern world that constitutionally establishes white supremacy and racial oppression, and

WHEREAS apartheid is a system that affronts the most profound values of humanity and democracy and violates the teachings of our religion, and the apartheid regime poses a moral challenge to all who cherish liberty and decency, and

WHEREAS in 1976 the Central Conference of American Rabbis protested against racism and police brutality in South Africa and its dealings with Zimbabwe,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the CCAR:

1. Reaffirms its condemnation of apartheid.
2. Calls upon the government of South Africa to release immediately Nelson Mandela and all others imprisoned because of their opposition to apartheid.
3. Calls upon the government of South Africa to enter into negotiations aimed at eliminating apartheid with bona fide representatives of the victims of apartheid.
4. Calls upon the Canadian Parliament and the United States Congress to enact legislation that will ban new business investment and bank loans in South Africa; ban the importation into the United States and Canada of all South African gold coins; ban all sales of U.S. and Canadian equipment with military and police application; ban U.S. and Canadian contributions to South Africa through the International Monetary Fund.
5. Calls upon the governments of the United States and Canada to reduce the level of diplomatic recognition of South Africa.
6. Further calls on the U.S. Congress and the Canadian Parliament, if substantial progress toward the abolition of apartheid does not occur within one year, to enact the following legislation:

divestiture of United States and Canadian assets in South Africa and institution of a trade embargo by the United States and Canada against South Africa.

7. Affirms its fraternal support for the Southern African Union for Progressive Judaism, the Southern African Association of Progressive Rabbis, and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in their support for fundamental reform of South African life and institutions, their condemnation of violence, and their complete rejection of apartheid.

8. Directs the Executive Board in a manner it deems appropriate and responsible to boycott firms that engage in business in South Africa and have not accepted the Sullivan Principles.

9. Directs the Executive Board to divest the CCAR of all investments in corporations doing business in South Africa.

10. Further recommends that CCAR members urge their congregations and their individual members to cease the purchase of South African gold coins as an immediate, direct, personal and symbolic protest against South Africa's racist and repressive regime.

11. Calls upon the members of the CCAR and their congregations and constituencies to lend moral and substantive support to those in South Africa actually engaged in the non-violent struggle against apartheid:

A. by continuing messages of support and encouragement to individuals such as Beyers Naude, Allan Boesak, Helen Suzmann, Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, Winnie Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and others.

B. by establishing a relationship with and contributing to the Legal Resource Center at the University of Wetwatersrand.