

HB 476, Statement of Opposition, 5/10/2016

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Introduction:

I'd like to acknowledge those who are fighting to oppose HB 476 and thank them for their courage and resistance.

The following is an excerpt from the 2015 Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine. This statement provides some rationale for my opposition to HB 476. It was signed by myself and over 1,100 Black activists, scholars, students and organizations. At least 32 of the individuals who signed this statement were residents of Ohio at the time of signing:

2015 Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine:

Palestinian liberation represents an inherent threat to Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid, an apparatus built and sustained on ethnic cleansing, land theft and the denial of Palestinian humanity and sovereignty.¹ While we acknowledge that the apartheid configuration in Israel/Palestine is unique from the United States (and South Africa), we continue to see connections between the situation of Palestinians and Black People.

Israel's widespread use of detention and imprisonment against Palestinians² evokes the mass incarceration of Black people³ in the U.S., including the political imprisonment⁴ of our own revolutionaries. Soldiers, police, and courts justify lethal force against us and our children who pose no imminent threat. And while the U.S. and Israel would continue to oppress us without collaborating with each other, we have witnessed police and soldiers from the two countries train side-by-side.⁵

U.S. and Israeli officials and media criminalize our existence, portray violence against us as "isolated incidents," and call our resistance illegitimate" or "terrorism." These narratives ignore decades and centuries of anti-Palestinian and anti-Black violence that have always been at the core of Israel and the U.S. We recognize the racism that characterizes Israel's treatment of Palestinians is also directed against others in the region, including intolerance, police brutality,⁶ and violence against Israel's African population.⁷ Israeli officials call asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea "infiltrators"⁸ and detain them in the desert,⁹ while the state has sterilized Ethiopian Israelis¹⁰ without their knowledge or consent. These issues call for unified action against anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and Zionism.

We know Israel's violence toward Palestinians would be impossible without the U.S. defending Israel on the world stage and funding its violence with over \$3 billion annually.¹¹ We call on the U.S. Government to end economic and diplomatic aid to Israel. We wholeheartedly endorse Palestinian civil society's 2005 call for Boycott.. Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)¹² against Israel and call on Black and U.S. Institutions and organizations to do the same. We urge people of conscience to recognize the struggle for Palestinian liberation as a key matter of our time.

As the BDS movement grows,¹³ we offer G4S, the world's largest private security

company, as a target for further joint struggle.¹⁴ G4S harms thousands of Palestinian political prisoners illegally held in Israel¹⁵ and hundreds of Black and brown youth held in its privatized juvenile prisons¹⁶ in the U.S. The corporation profits from incarceration and deportation from the U.S. and Palestine, to the U.K,¹⁷ South Africa,¹⁸ and Australia.¹⁹ We reject notions of “security” that make any of our groups unsafe and insist no one is free until all of us are.

We offer this statement first and foremost to Palestinians, whose suffering does not go unnoticed and whose resistance and resilience under racism and colonialism inspires us. It is to Palestinians, as well as the Israeli and U.S. Governments, that we declare our commitment to working through cultural, economic, and political means to ensure Palestinian liberation at the same time as we work towards our own. We encourage activists to use this statement to advance solidarity with Palestine and we also pressure our own Black political figures to finally take action on this issue. As we continue these transnational conversations and interactions, we aim to sharpen our practice of joint struggle against capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and the various racism's embedded in and around our societies.

Conclusion:

I strongly oppose HB 476 but am not asking politicians in the Government Oversight and Accountability committee to reject it because I don't believe they have the capacity to reach the same political conclusions about this bill that its opponents have. When all people can participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their daily lives then I'll regain my faith in representative forms of governance.

1 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/ethnic-cleansing-palestine-150514130231067.html>

2 http://www.btselem.org/statistics/detainees_and_prisoners

3 <http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet>

4 <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/32043-beyond-innocence-america-s-political-prisoners-and-the-fight-against-mass-incarceration>

5 <http://www. Ebony.com/news-views/the-fergusonpalestine-connection-403#axzz48CjX5No3>

6 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/israel-ethiopian-jews-rally-police-brutality-150503155817247.html>

7 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPsv4Af31A>

8 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/20/israel-netanyahu-african-immigrants-jewish>

9 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/toughening-its-stance-toward-migrants-israel-pushes-africans-to-leave/2015/05/14/e1637bec-f350-11e4-bca5-21b51bbd93e_story.html

10 http://www.salon.com/2013/01/28/israel_admits_ethiopian_jewish_immigrants_were_given_birth_control_shots/

11 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/17/world/middleeast/17israel.html>

12 <http://bdsmovement.net/bdsintro>

13 <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/554dcd1c3de42f2a996d422e8ca2b75/boycott-israel-drive-gains-strength-raising-alarm>

14 <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/23/us/columbia-university-prison-divest/>

15 <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/campaign/prisoners/>

16 <http://www.dji.state.fl.us/programs-facilities/residential-facilities>

17 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/22/g4s-convictions-deaths-employees-racial-overtones>

18 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/south-african-prisoners-sue-g4s-over-torture-claims>

19 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/23/manus-security-firm-g4s-responsible-for-february-violence-says-law-centre>