

“I hope the Committee understands what, exactly, you’re being told to do. I come from a village called Deir Ibbie west of Ramallah in Palestine. I lost my home and land to the Zionist occupation in 1967. The truth is Israel is an apartheid state, with a system of laws that clearly favors Zionist citizens and overly treats non-Zionists, particularly Palestinians, as inferior and with disdain.

I also firmly believe that systematic extermination by destroying hospitals, food and healthcare supplies – mass murder to journalists, healthcare workers, first responders is happening in Gaza. The Zionist entity replaces bags of sugar with sand to intentionally starve the people of Gaza. I strongly oppose what the nation of Israel, through its military and its illegal settlers and its government, are doing to Palestinians and others who personally condemn Israel’s mass murder destruction policy.

This is a repression bill and a weaponization of civil rights and free speech. It’s not about protecting anyone; it’s about encouraging the apartheid Zionists under the guise of protecting all Jewish people. We need to mobilize against it!

The IHRA definition of antisemitism includes “contemporary examples” of antisemitism that are designed to silence legitimate criticisms of the state of Israel. This bill will be used to criminalize speech and actions that express solidarity with the Palestinian people and criticize Israel’s ongoing genocide and long running systems of occupation and apartheid. This is a clear attack on free speech. We must act now to stop this bill!

If S.B. 297 were law right now, practicing my free speech rights by the expression of my life experience in Palestine and abroad, closely held, evidence-based conclusions to you would instantly be classifiable as “antisemitic” under the IHRA definition. It means nothing that there is a disclaimer in S.B. 297 stating that it isn’t intended to shackle free speech, because it clearly is. You can’t stop me from holding and expressing my beliefs about what Israel is perpetrating in Gaza with flimsy censorship, but then, no one can fire me from my job or kick me out of school or publicly punish me. If you make this bill a law, you will silence many others from sharing their views and their truth because those are the stakes for holding the “wrong” opinion under S.B. 297. That is why you must reject this proposal.”