Bill Would Splinter Boycott Against Israel

The Israel Anti-Boycott Act, which has been introduced this year in both the House and Senate, is designed to protect U.S. businesses and individuals from being pressured into an economic boycott of Israel or other friendly nations by international governmental organizations.

This bill would extend the Export Administration Act of 1979 law to international organizations, such as the United Nations or even the European Union, that might parallel the Arab League's original "blacklist" of companies doing business with Israel. For example, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is scheduled to publish a "blacklist" of firms operating in or have business relationships in the West Bank beyond Israel's 1949 Armistice Lines, which includes all of Jerusalem. This database would be used to place public pressure on these firms to withdraw from the disputed territories. The UNHRC recently sent "warning letters" to 150 firms—including 30 U.S. firms—which do business in Israel or the territories, asking them to confirm the details of their commerce there.

The Economy Ministry's Office of Strategic Affairs has already received information that some of the companies who received the letters have stated they do not intend to renew contracts or sign new ones in Israel.

The ACLU—along with a coalition of leftist groups—oppose the Act. The ACLU claims it will violate the First Amendment. But the ACLU and other opponents ignore the four-decade track record of the 1979 law. They have not cited a single instance in which "political beliefs" have led to civil or criminal penalties under current law.

Courts have repeatedly upheld the 1979 act against constitutional challenges on free-speech grounds as a legitimate restriction on commercial conduct. Criticism of Israel, its treatment of Palestinians and its settlement policies are indeed protected by the First Amendment as free speech. The Israel Anti-Boycott Act does not target the rights of U.S. individuals and companies to criticize Israel, which—like any country—is subject to criticism for its policies.

“It is critical that U.S. legislators quickly enact the Israel Anti-Boycott Act,” said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel, President of Christians in Defense of Israel, and founder and president of Covenant Journey. “The United Nations Human Rights Council has a history of anti-Semitism and an irrational bias against Israel. The intent is clear—they want to destroy Israel. It is anti-Semitic at its core.

“Israel is the only free and democratic country in the Middle East. Israel has more legitimate and historical right to its land than any country in the world. Jews have lived in the land for millennia. Israel is a leader in economy and a world leader in technology, business, agriculture and more. Divesting in Israel will only harm those who divest.”

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