

Lynn Mason
42 Mill Road
New Canaan, CT 06840

Senator Richard Blumenthal
706 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 13, 2017

Dear Senator Blumenthal,

My name is Lynn Mason. I am a New Canaan resident and as Secretary-Treasurer and former Business Manager of Laborers' International Union of North America, Local 136, I represent 410 Greenwich municipal professional and educational employees.

I returned on Saturday from a Tree of Life Educational Fund Trade Labor Delegation to the occupied Palestinian West Bank. While I deeply appreciate your service in representing our state, I am compelled to speak out regarding your position on the Israeli/U.S. alliance; your co-sponsorship of **S.720 Israel Anti-Boycott Act** and statements you have made such as "our steadfast ally Israel has sought since its founding to live at peace with its neighbors".

While visiting the West Bank we met with and listened to both Palestinian and Israeli voices of conscience. We heard and witnessed countless examples of the horrors, humiliations and daily indignities with which our Palestinian brothers and sisters must contend: Endless lines, body scans and strip searches they must endure at daily checkpoints just to get to work (often at unsafe and underpaid jobs); illegal settlements which are in violation of international law and the Geneva Convention; withholding by Israel of needed natural resources, especially water; separate and unequal sets of applied laws; separate and unequal education; detention without due process which regularly involves inhumane treatment and torture; institutionalized discrimination, collective punishment and extrajudicial killings. I could go on but hope that you will avail yourself of the resources below so that you can get a clearer picture for yourself.

How can you or anyone refer to Israel as a democracy or say it is trying to "live at peace with its neighbors" when it holds ~5 million indigenous people under seemingly endless military occupation or relegates them to refugee/stateless status with no voting rights - violating human rights at every level (night time house raids, house demolitions and the above-mentioned abuses)? You speak often of "Palestinian terrorism" yet remain silent regarding Israel's terrorism and daily abuse of all Palestinian's which is done by design to make them feel 'hunted'. Palestinians are being collectively punished for the 'crime' of being Palestinian.

As a model for democracy in the modern world, can we remain complicit with a country that refuses to define its borders, ignores international law and uses its U.S. backed power to test U.S. made weapons on its captive indigenous population without jeopardizing our own democratic principles and veracity? We cannot afford to stand by wordlessly when Palestinian children are being imprisoned in overcrowded refugee camps, poisoned and malnourished, deprived of a decent childhood and education all in the name of 'democracy' and 'Israeli security'.

And now, we as Americans are facing legislation that would deny our right to peacefully and non-violently boycott a nation who is engaging in such reprehensible behavior. Desmond Tutu said:

“Those who turn a blind eye to injustice actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

It appears, in light of **S.720 Israel Anti-Boycott Act** that not only is our government siding with a known and vicious oppressor, but that it is beginning to embrace their oppressive tactics.

As one of our Israeli Jewish speakers said “there is nothing Jewish about this occupation, there is nothing Jewish about the Israeli government’s behavior.” I add my voice in saying “there is nothing Democratic about this occupation, there is nothing Democratic about the Israeli government’s behavior.”

Today I joined Jewish Voice for Peace, I encourage you to do the same or at least review the extensive resources on their website <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org>. I also encourage you to remove your support from all anti-BDS legislation before the United States joins Israel in abolishing the right of free, non-violent speech and action for the citizens of our nation. I encourage you to explore the Tree of Life Educational Fund website at www.tolef.org and sign the ‘Petition for a Just Peace in Israel/Palestine’.

I would very much appreciate having the opportunity for our delegation to meet with you to discuss this further. I want to support you but know that morally I can take no part in enabling and further emboldening the oppressive Israeli government in its horrific human rights violations. I hope that together we can find a path to being on the right side of history.

Sincerely,
Lynn Mason