



Boycotts in support of Palestinian human rights are a form of constitutionally protected speech and cannot be singled out for punishment just because Members of Congress may not agree with them.



Jewish Voice for Peace



## Protect free speech and oppose illegal Israeli settlements: Reject H.R. 1697/S. 720

### 1) Upends decades of US policy to protect illegal Israeli settlements

Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are illegal under international law and recognized as such by the U.S. government. Human Rights Watch recently issued a report calling for companies to cease doing business with Israeli settlements in order to comply with international law. This legislation does the opposite by seeking to amend the Export Administration Act of 1979 to prohibit U.S. individuals and companies from taking certain actions to comply with calls by the U.N. to boycott illegal Israeli settlements. **H.R. 1697/S. 720 would provide legal support to illegal settlements and upend decades of established U.S. policy.**

### 2) Violates the first amendment

The U.S. has a long, rich history of boycotts being used as a tactic to advance social justice and equal rights. In fact, in 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co.* that political boycotts are protected by the First Amendment. This means that boycotts in support of Palestinian human rights are a form of constitutionally protected speech and cannot be singled out for punishment just because members of Congress may not agree with them. H.R. 1697/S.

720 would violate the first amendment by imposing civil and criminal penalties – including potential jail time – on individuals or companies that comply with a call from an international body like the U.N. or EU to boycott illegal Israeli settlements. At a time when the President of the United States has declared that he is in “a running war with the media,” and attacks those who criticize him or his policies, Congress must be vigilant in upholding the First Amendment.

### 3) Against public opinion

According to a recent poll released by the Brookings Institution, 60% of Democrats and 46% of all Americans support sanctions or stronger action against Israel because of settlement construction. This is mirrored in the Jewish community

where a recent poll found that 49% of American Jews under the age of 30 support boycott of the settlements. International bodies, human rights organizations, and increasingly public opinion recognize that the United States must put pressure on

Israel in order to create a just peace with equality, human rights, and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis. H.R. 1697/S. 720 does the opposite by seeking to amend U.S. policy in favor of permanent occupation.

**We call on you to reject H.R. 1697/S. 720 which upends decades of US policy to protect illegal Israeli settlements, violates the First Amendment, and goes against public opinion.**