

# AIPAC Sponsored “Fast Track Measures” on Behalf of Israel: Congressional Legislation Targets BDS Initiatives

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Global Research, April 28, 2015

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*AIPAC-promoted/anti-BDS measures were attached as amendments to House and Senate fast track legislation introduced earlier in April.*

Its purpose is to ram through Congress Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) bills global justice advocates call NAFTA on steroids – stealth corporate coup d’etats.

The House measure “discourage(s) politically motivated actions to boycott, divest from, or sanction Israel and seek(s) the elimination of politically motivated non-tariff barriers on Israeli goods, services, or other commerce imposed on the State of Israel.”

The Senate amendment hasn’t been made public. Its language is similar to S. 619: United States-Israel Trade Enhancement Act of 2015. It states in part:

“To include among the principal trade negotiating objectives of the United States regarding commercial partnerships trade negotiating objectives with respect to discouraging activity that discourages, penalizes, or otherwise limits commercial relations with Israel, and for other purposes.”

It “discourage(s) politically motivated actions by foreign countries, non-member states of the United Nations, international organizations, and affiliated agencies of international organizations, that are intended to penalize or otherwise limit commercial relations specifically with –

A. Israel;

B. persons doing business in Israel or in territories controlled by Israel (namely, Occupied Palestine and Golan); or

C. successor entities to persons described in subparagraph B.”

AIPAC prioritizes enacting anti-BDS legislation. Its provisions would apply to all trade agreements.

On April 23, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) issued a statement saying:

It “strongly opposes proposed trade legislation intended to institutionalize support for the Israeli occupation and attempt to criminalize non-violent human

rights boycotts of Israel.”

Legislative language “comes in response to growing grassroots support in the United States and across the globe for using boycotts, divestment and sanctions tactics as tools to further justice, equality, and human rights for Palestinians.”

“If passed, the legislation would reverse the long standing US policy of opposing the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories by de facto recognizing all settlements as part of a ‘greater Israel.’ ”

“The proposed legislation would also mandate US government actions to track and penalize commercial boycotts, a violation of constitutionally protected political speech.”

“From South Africa to the grape boycott to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) tactics have been essential tools used to create a more just society.”

JVP’s Federal Policy Organizer Rabbi Joseph Berman explained:

“This legislation, which actually encourages illegal settlement building while strengthening the far right in Israel, shows that BDS is an increasingly powerful means to challenge Israel’s impunity when it comes to Palestinian rights. We urge Congress to reject this legislation.”

The measure, if enacted, contravenes official US policy with regard to Occupied Palestinian Territories.

It aims to criminalize efforts to boycott Israeli products and services. Nothing under international law prevents nations, businesses, groups or individuals from doing so.

The legislation effectively considers all parts of occupied Judea and Samaria Israel covets part of its territory – including privately owned Palestinian land it steals for exclusive Jewish development.

It violates core First Amendment rights. It makes Washington more complicit than already with Israeli high crimes against peace.

The Senate Finance Committee passed the amendment unanimously. House Ways and Means Committee passage followed a day later.

Senate co-sponsor Rob Portman (R. OH) said the measure “sends a clear message that if you want to be an economic partner with the United States, you cannot support politically motivated boycotts of Israel.”

“We must make clear that the United States will not stand with those who attempt to weaken Israel.”

The amendment specifically targets European nations and companies – to pressure them in trade negotiations against supporting BDS initiatives.

It’s the only region where BDS efforts gained traction. Boycotting Israel is more important

now than ever.

It's the single most effective way to hold it accountable for collectively punishing Palestinians lawlessly.

Congressional legislation won't derail BDS activism. It's a vital global initiative whose time has come. Grassroots movements must lead the way.

Global justice advocates urge international civil society organizations and supporters everywhere to impose broad boycotts - to implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to apartheid South Africa.

Pressure is needed for embargoes and sanctions - for equity, justice and peace.

It's long past time for Israel to be held accountable for high crimes too grave to ignore. Anti-BDS congressional legislation won't stop its eventual day of reckoning from arriving.

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