

# The Israel Anti-Boycott Act: The Bill that Could Imprison “Israel Boycotters” for 20 years

By [If Americans Knew](#)

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*In a recent post on the Mondoweiss website, Journalist **Philip Weiss** examines the [Israel Anti-Boycott Act](#) that would punish those boycotting Israel with a minimum civil penalty of \$250,000 and a maximum criminal penalty of \$1 million and 20 years in prison. The legislation is being sponsored by both conservatives and liberals.*

*Mondoweiss, founded by Weiss in 2006, [explains](#) on its website that it “grew inside the progressive Jewish community.” In his post Weiss is commenting on an [Intercept article](#) by Glenn Greenwald and Ryan Grim about the legislation.*

*Weiss says that the Israel lobby is responsible for the legislation and indicates that it is Jewish Zionists, not Christian Zionists, who are the main wielders of power on the issue.*

*He writes:*

*“Ultimately, this is a story about the fight inside Jewish life over Zionism and support for Israel. I believe we will win this fight, and that this legislation will help us. The legislation will shock many civil-liberties-loving Jews. The Intercept story will force legislators to redraft the legislation.”*

*Weiss reports that “a year ago Stephanie Schriock of [Emily’s List](#) and JJ Goldberg of the [Forward](#) described the ‘gigantic’ and ‘shocking’ degree of the Democratic Party’s reliance on Jewish wealth for campaign contributions.”*

*Below is an excerpt from Weiss’s article:*

**[“Bill making it a federal crime to support BDS sends shockwaves through progressive community.”](#)**

*...This bill is the work of the Israel lobby. It was drafted by one of the lead Israel-support groups, AIPAC- “one of the most powerful, and pernicious, lobbying forces in the country,” as the Intercept puts it. Greenwald and Grim raise the issue of the American people’s interest:*

*“In what conceivable sense is it of benefit to Americans to turn them into felons for the crime of engaging in political activism in protest of a foreign nation’s government?”*

I would answer that question frankly by explaining that the bill is about the Israel lobby's presence inside the Democratic Party, and therefore of the role of conservative Zionist Jews inside the Democratic Party. The efforts by many to claim that the Israel lobby is also evangelical Christians (lately Paul Pillar [at Lobelog](#)) is pure deception when it comes to the Democratic Party. Evangelical Christians don't tell Schumer and Gillibrand how to vote on stem-cell research or abortion, and they don't tell them how to vote on Israel either. No, the organized Jewish community does.

Older Jews tend to be huge ideological supporters of Israel. Ben Cardin goes to synagogues and [tells other older Jews that Palestinian statehood](#) is "anti-American." Schumer has called himself the "Schomer" or guardian of Israel and [said that there is a Jewish interest in supporting Israel](#). A year ago Stephanie Schriock of [Emily's List](#) and [JJ Goldberg of the Forward](#) described the "gigantic" and "shocking" degree of the Democratic Party's reliance on Jewish wealth for campaign contributions.

Ultimately, this is a story about the fight inside Jewish life over Zionism and support for Israel. I believe we will win this fight, and that this legislation will help us. The legislation will shock many civil-liberties-loving Jews. The Intercept story will force legislators to redraft the legislation.

And, most important: a diverse coalition of human-rights-loving Democrats are enraged by this legislation and are organizing against AIPAC's role in the party. Call it the Keith Ellison wing, the Sanders wing- young Jews, young Latinos, blacks, women [*& numerous Christians*] — they want a more progressive policy on Israel and many of them support BDS. Bernie Sanders [did not attend the AIPAC conference](#) in 2016, because his base opposed such pandering, and that base is fighting for the heart of the party.

Lastly, remember this story and the frank declaration of support for a foreign nation by legislators the next time you hear about the insidious influence of Russia in our politics. As the Intercept notes, "Among the co-sponsors of the bill are several of the politicians who have become political celebrities by positioning themselves as media leaders of the anti-Trump #Resistance, including three California House members who have become heroes to Democrats and staples of the cable news circuit: Ted Lieu, Adam Schiff, and Eric Swalwell."

Adam Schiff is worthy of special mention, as David Bromwich points out to me. "He is among the scores of obedient Democrats co-sponsoring the bill. Schiff has a high reputation in liberal circles, but he voted for the Iraq war, supported the Saudi intervention in Yemen, said the assassination of Qaddafi was 'an end to the first chapter of another popular revolution,' and approved of Trump's bombing of Syria. On foreign policy he is a believer in the conventional wisdom of the Cold War and the War on Terror, that's all; but his opinions have taken on an outsize importance since he is now routinely accepted as the party's outstanding authority on Russia. He knows Russia about as well as he knew Iraq and Libya."

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