

MEDIA RELEASE

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Newly-formed Right to Boycott Network Urges Texas Lawmakers to Reject House Bill 89 & Senate Bills 134 and 29

The newly-formed Right to Boycott Network, an alliance of over a dozen state and local civil liberties, human rights, faith-based, and community groups, calls on Texas lawmakers to reject House Bill 89 and Senate Bills 134 and 29 as an attack on the constitutional rights of Texans and a waste of taxpayer money.

HB 89, SB 134, and SB 29 are intended specifically to suppress **boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS)** campaigns for Palestinian rights. As noted by civil liberties groups like the Center for Constitutional Rights, National Lawyers Guild, Bill of Rights Defense Committee and Defense Dissent Foundations, such legislation endangers the First Amendment right of all Texans to engage in boycotts and other economic acts of conscience in support of human rights causes. If passed into law, HB 89 and SB 134 or 29 would require the state comptroller to create a blacklist of companies that abide by boycott and divestment campaigns related to Israeli human rights abuses and prohibit the state from making contracts with or investing in them.

BDS is a diverse, inclusive, grassroots human rights movement modeled on the US Civil Rights movement and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, both of which employed BDS tactics. It seeks to use peaceful economic means to pressure Israel into ending its nearly-half-century-old military occupation of Palestinian lands; recognizing the right of Palestinian citizens of Israel, who comprise about 20% of Israel's population and face widespread systematic discrimination, to full legal equality; and allowing Palestinian refugees to return to homes and lands they were expelled from by Israel, as stipulated by the United Nations.

HB 89 and SB 134 and 29 would infringe upon Texans' constitutional right to support BDS. They would also waste taxpayers' money by burdening the government with additional bureaucracy. It isn't known yet how much the anti-BDS bills would cost taxpayers, however the California Department of Finance estimated that similar legislation in that state would cost upwards of \$140 million annually. Falling gas prices and business tax cuts have reduced Texas' public coffers by \$10 billion since 2015. These low numbers come when the state has high needs, from rising Medicaid costs to a broken foster-care system. It can ill afford costly, anti-BDS legislation.

The Right to Boycott Network calls on state legislatures to uphold the constitutional rights of Texans and to be fiscally responsible with taxpayers' money by dismissing HB 89, SB 134, SB 29 and any similar measures that come before them.

The Right to Boycott Network is an alliance of organizations working together to disseminate information about BDS and anti-boycott legislation to the public and to encourage Texas citizens to lobby against anti-boycott bills. Members include the Austin and San Antonio chapters of [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), [Code Pink](#) Austin, the [Palestine Solidarity Committee](#) at the University of Texas at Austin, [Students for Justice for Palestine](#) at the University of Houston and University of Texas at Arlington, [Pax Christi Austin](#), and the [Austin Democratic Socialists of America](#).