Hanitriniala, Mendrika

From: Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Sent: October 23, 2020 2:57 PM
To: Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Cc: Teng, Deborah
Subject: Webform submission: Submission of material 23216

Submitted on Fri, 10/23/2020 - 14:45

Application ID: 23216

Submitted values are:

Bill or item of business: **Bill 168, Combating Antisemitism Act, 2020**

Choose a topic

Do you know the bill title or business (e.g., pre-budget consultations) you'd like to speak or submit material about?
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I am submitting material as an individual

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Paste submission
Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and other Ontario MPPs,

I am writing to ask you to vote against Bill 168: the Combating Antisemitism Act. If passed, this bill could have grave consequences for freedom of expression and human rights advocacy in Ontario.

This Bill proposes to enshrine into law the flawed and widely-rejected International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, including its eleven examples. As an individual who values justice, human rights, and freedom of expression, I am concerned that the IHRA definition will be used to suppress Charter-protected political speech, specifically related to legitimate criticism of the state of Israel.

It concerns me that 7 of the 11 examples of antisemitism in the IHRA definition focus on Israel, rather than on prejudice directed towards the Jewish people. For example: "7. denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour". Such an example would consider hundreds of thousands of your constituents, including many Jews and members of the Ontario Palestinian community, as antisemites simply for exercising their right to defend Palestinians and denounce the discriminatory policies of the state of Israel.

Israel's record of racial discrimination is well documented by mainstream human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Yet Bill 168 would effectively label these organizations as antisemitic. Indeed, the Trump administration is currently threatening to do so in the US, relying primarily on the IHRA definition.

The definition has been opposed by hundreds of Canadian academics as well as many organizations including the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Labour Congress. Even Kenneth Stern, the original author of the IHRA definition, has strongly opposed its use as a legal or administrative definition of antisemitism, warning that it would pose a threat to both academic freedom and freedom of expression in general.

Recently, the definition was considered by Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary city councils: in all cases, councillors declined to adopt it. In Brampton, Ontario, the definition itself was adopted, but the motion was later amended to exclude the examples on account of strong constituent pushback.

I therefore ask that you consider this matter carefully. The fight against antisemitism is extremely important. However, the IHRA definition is not the way to fight it. Please take a stand against antisemitism, but also support freedom of expression and a commitment to Palestinian human rights. I urge you either to vote against Bill 168 entirely or to amend the Bill so that the 11 examples are explicitly excluded from the definition.

Thank you for your consideration.