

U.S. Muslim congresswoman introduces resolution upholding right to boycott Israel



Washington, July 21 (RHC)-- Muslim U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar has introduced a resolution that seeks to protect the right to engage in boycotts against Israel, despite efforts by federal, state and local officials to pass various anti-boycott measures.

Omar, a Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives, proposed the resolution earlier this week in a bid to push back against Washington's laws banning the Israel boycotts.

The text of the measure affirms the right of Americans to organize boycotts of foreign countries. While the resolution doesn't explicitly name Israel or the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, she told media outlets that the resolution concerns Israel.

"We are introducing a resolution ... to really speak about the American values that support and believe in our ability to exercise our First Amendment rights in regard to boycotting," Omar told Al-Monitor. Resolution 496 was introduced with two cosponsors, Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and John Lewis of Georgia.

Omar's decision to introduce the measure shows she is not intimidated by President Donald Trump's recent racist attacks on her and other women of color lawmakers, including his accusations that they are anti-Semitic and anti-Israel.

"It affirms the right of all activists and people of conscience to advocate for human rights through boycotts against systems of oppression," Hind Awwad, spokesperson for the Palestinian BDS National Committee said.

The BDS boycott campaign against Israel began in July 2005 by 171 Palestinian organizations, which calls for "various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law."

Omar's pro-boycott resolution was introduced at the same time that Congress was advancing a nonbinding bipartisan resolution to condemn BDS. The move is the latest in a series of measures in U.S. state and federal legislatures to sideline or criminalize the anti-racist BDS campaign.

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