

Israel passes law banning sympathy for Palestinians in schools



Tel Aviv, July 18 (RHC)-- The Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset, has approved a law banning any criticism of the regime's harsh treatment of Palestinians. Out of 120 members of the Knesset, some 43 voted in favor and 24 voted against the law on Tuesday. The law bars groups critical of the Tel Aviv policies and actions toward Palestinians from entering schools in the occupied territories.

Many Israeli groups have been critical of the regime when it comes to how it has dealt with Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip over the years. However, Israel has sought to limit the activities of those groups and movements under the pretext that they are putting the life of its soldiers at risk and exposing the regime's security to numerous threats.

The new law comes as part of amendments to Israel's education act and would enable hard-line Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who heads a far-right political party, to order schools to ban certain groups from giving lectures to students.

Rights groups have criticized the new law, saying it is Israel's latest attempt to stifle dissent by delegitimizing rights groups and NGOs. The law comes amid renewed Israel violence against

Palestinians in Gaza, where people have been protesting for months against a crippling Israeli blockade on the enclave. Over 150 Palestinians have been killed since the protests erupted along the border separating Gaza and the occupied territories in March.

Among major Israeli NGOs that have fiercely criticized the regime's treatment of Palestinians is Breaking the Silence. The group collects and publishes testimony from Israeli veterans about how the military has dealt with protests in the West Bank and in Gaza over the years.

Breaking the Silence reacted to the ratification of the new law, which has been named after the group, saying it was exactly meant to weaken the advocates of the Palestinians' rights. "It's really about trying to silence and cover up what's been going on in the occupied territories for 51 years," said Avner Gvanyahu, the group's director.

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