



## **PROTECT AND ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS:**

### **OPPOSE H.R. 2748/S. 1061 ISRAELI RELATIONS NORMALIZATION ACT**

The US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR), a national network of activists and organizations who are committed to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and who work to end U.S. complicity in their oppression, strongly urges members of Congress **not to cosponsor or vote for H. R. 2748 / S. 1061, the Israeli Relations Normalization Act of 2021.** This bill encourages the expansion of the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords, deeply transactional Trump era deals which sideline the voices and demands of the Palestinian people, and allow de facto annexation to continue unabated.

Sections of the bill employ language that could lead to **restrictions against free speech supporting Palestinian rights**, while the bill also has **provisions that could lead to penalizing organizations that do not support these accords or other projects that marginalize the Palestinian people.**

Although the bill purports to advance regional cooperation, including in respect for human rights, technological innovation, healthcare, climate, and water scarcity, it actively ignores Israel's violations of Palestinian rights. For example, Israel uses surveillance technology to spy on Palestinians and limit their freedom of movement, denies healthcare access to Palestinians under brutal military occupation and blockade, and destroys Palestinian lands and ecosystems while using environmental rhetoric.

#### **1. The Abraham Accords are Trump-era business deals that perpetuate U.S.-backed violence in the region**

Sec 3 (2) in H.R. 2748/S. 1061 notes that it is the policy of the United States '*to develop and implement a regional strategy...to enhance the prospects for regional peace, respect for human rights, land] transparent governance...*', while the bill instead focuses on deals between apartheid and authoritarian states which only serve to perpetuate disregard for human rights.

- ❖ There can be no lasting peace in the region without respecting the rights of the Palestinian people to freedom, justice, and equality. **While Palestinians remain under separate-and-unequal apartheid, pursuing deals between Israel and other countries entrenches Israeli impunity for human rights abuses**, including demolition of Palestinian homes, ongoing land theft and de-facto annexation, and a brutal 15-year blockade on Gaza. Focusing on negotiations and emphasizing a two state framework cannot be used to sidestep the need to center Palestinian human rights.
- ❖ These Trump era business deals led to the UAE's ability to procure advanced F-35 weaponry,



granting a known human rights abuser access to additional U.S. weaponry, a far cry from advancing regional peace.

- **The devastating war in Yemen, in which the UAE has played a key role**, has been condemned in Congress and acknowledged by the administration via their announcement last year to limit arms sales to Saudi and the UAE.
- **The UAE is one of the main suppliers of military funding and resources to Libya** in blatant violation of a U.N. embargo on arms. (*New York Times*)
- ❖ Morocco signed this deal **in exchange for Trump's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, in violation of U.S. policy precedent and U.N. understandings. The deal thereby undermined the right of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.** (*Haaretz*)

## **2. This bill increases potential for censorship of U.S. and international organizations**

### **❖ Limiting free speech in support of Palestinian human rights**

Sec 3 (7) as the statement of policy includes vague language *'to oppose efforts to delegitimize the state of Israel and legal barriers to normalization of relations with Israel.'*

- These kinds of policy statements have been broadly construed in the past to **limit the free speech of those who support Palestinian human rights** in the U.S. and around the world, sometimes leading to criminalization of that speech.

### **❖ Censoring and defunding international organizations and institutions**

Sec 4 (6) calls for the Secretary of State and other federal agencies to submit a report describing how *'the United States Government will leverage diplomatic lines of effort and resources from other stakeholders (including from foreign governments, international donors, and multilateral institutions) to encourage normalization...'* and Sec 5 (b)(1) calls for a *'A description of options for leveraging contributions of international donors, institutions, and partner countries to facilitate people-to-people and government-to-government relations between Israelis and Arabs.'*

- This language opens the possibility that organizations that may not support **normalization as defined in this bill (i.e. with Israeli impunity for ongoing violations of Palestinian rights)** would be threatened with a loss of resources.

## **3. H.R. 2748/S. 1061 does not protect regional human rights, address climate solutions or water scarcity, enhance healthcare access, or advance**



## technological innovation

Sec 3 (2) in the bill states that it is U.S. policy 'to enhance...cooperation to address water scarcity, climate solutions, health care, sustainable development, and other areas,' ignoring Israel's dismal record on all these counts. No real progress on these issues can be made without focusing on Palestinian rights and Israeli accountability, rather than normalization of existing inequalities.

In Sec 2 (6), 'these normalization and peace agreements,' are lauded for their potential to 'transform the region by...enhancing technological innovation,' conveniently ignoring the ways Israel uses technology to surveil and control Palestinians, and then exports it to other regional authoritarian governments to use on their civil society.

- ❖ **Human rights:** Leading human rights organizations recently acknowledged what Palestinians have known for years: Israel is an separate-and-unequal apartheid state presiding over a military occupation . (*Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem*), Israel's May 2021 assault on Gaza, when over 200 Palestinians were killed, were also possible war crimes.
- ❖ **Climate solutions:** While the overall regional impact of climate change is significant, the UN development program considers the Israeli military occupation an environmental risk in its own right. For example, Israel destroys native plant life and ecosystems and disposes of waste across the West Bank, and military occupation and other policies increase climate vulnerability for Palestinians. (*Al Shabaka, OpinioJuris*)
- ❖ **Water scarcity:** Israel controls the vast majority of the water supply for the West Bank and Gaza, using these water resources to provide unlimited water to Israel and its illegal settlements while Palestinians suffer severe water shortage. 97% of water in Gaza is undrinkable. (*B'Tselem, Alliance for Water Justice in Palestine*)
- ❖ **Healthcare:** Israel maintains a separate-and-unequal system of healthcare access for Palestinians and Israelis. Policies limiting Palestinian freedom of movement deny patients the ability to travel for medical treatment ,while Israel blocks the building of medical infrastructure in Gaza after bombing campaigns, and stops the import of medical supplies. (*Al Shabaka, World Health Organization*)
- ❖ **Technology:** Israeli technology is exported to support authoritarian governments. The infamous Israeli NSO Group, blacklisted by the Biden administration, produces and sells **Pegasus spyware**, which **has been used globally by authoritarian governments to repress human rights defenders and journalists including in Morocco and the UAE**. (*The Intercept, Reuters*)

USCPR calls on Members of Congress to support legislation that advances genuine peace and justice in the region by addressing violations of Palestinian rights.

We urge Members **not to cosponsor or vote for H. R. 2748 / S. 1061, the Israeli Relations Normalization Act of 2021**, for the ways in which it normalizes militarization, occupation, apartheid, and inequality in the region. **There is nothing normal about apartheid.**