

Texas judge temporarily blocks anti-BDS legislation



Austin, May 28 (RHC)-- In the United States, a federal judge has temporarily blocked a Texas law that bans state contractors from boycotting Israel. Under the law, state contractors are required to sign a pledge vowing not to boycott Israel and not to take any action that is "intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or limit commercial relations with Israel."

The legislation was widely viewed as an attempt to criminalize support of the BDS -- Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions -- movement. Federal Judge Robert Pitman issued an injunction, saying: "The statute threatens 'to suppress unpopular ideas' and 'manipulate the public debate through coercion rather than persuasion.' This the First Amendment does not allow."

Part of the case stems from a lawsuit filed by Bahia Amawi, an Arabic-speaking child language specialist in the Pflugerville Independent School District in Texas. She lost her job of nine years for not signing the boycott pledge.

Bahia Amawi told reporters: "And I sent the e-mail to my speech coordinator telling her: 'Listen, I cannot sign this. This is against my principles, against my constitutional rights. And it's also against my moral and ethical values, considering that I am a Palestinian-American and I have family that actually live in the Occupied Territories, so it affects me personally, as well.'

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