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CUPE Ontario Statement on Anti-BDS Motion

CUPE Ontario is strongly opposed to the Private Member's Notice of Motion Number 36, introduced by Ontario PC MPP Gila Martow. As a labour organization representing more than 260,000 workers in this province, we are asking Ontario MPPs to vote "NO" on this motion on Thursday December 1 and urge them to oppose any further action on this motion.

The motion aims to shut down the expression of solidarity with Palestinian people living under occupation and violates the freedom of expression protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This motion is a blatant attack on freedom of expression and democratic rights, and a further attempt to silence any critique of Israel's violations of international law.

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement (BDS) is a global campaign that looks to increase social, economic and political pressures on Israel to end their occupation and colonization of Palestinian land and the violent exploitation of Palestinian people and workers. In 2005, Palestinian Civil Society organizations issued a call to the international community for a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against the state of Israel.

At its core, the BDS movement works to push Israel to comply with international law by ending their occupation and colonization of Palestinian territories. The movement places three demands on the state of Israel, each rooted in international humanitarian law: A recognition of the fundamental rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; an end to the military occupation of Palestinian territories and the dismantling of the illegal separation wall; and a recognition of the right of Palestinian refugees to return.

The BDS movement stands firmly against the dispossession of Palestinian communities and human rights violations. MPP Martow's motion grossly mischaracterizes the goals of the movement and overlooks the fact that the BDS movement is, at its core, about addressing issues of human rights violations by the state of Israel. Any attempts to falsely equate defending the human rights of Palestinians with the grotesque rise of anti-Semitic, racist, islamophobic and xenophobic movements is repugnant.

MPPs must oppose the motion censuring BDS. The BDS movement is a movement driven by a belief that all peoples should enjoy the same human rights. BDS will end when the state of Israel stops human rights abuses. A boycott movement that seeks to improve human rights should be supported by Ontario legislators.