



THE MOSSAWA CENTER CALLS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CONDEMN BILLS THAT RESTRICT FUNDING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN ISRAEL

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Haifa – On November 13th, 2011 the Knesset Ministerial Committee for Legislation passed two bills seeking to restrict funding from “foreign state entities” to Israeli non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The first law, proposed by Likud MK Ofir Akunis, limits the amount of donations that foreign state entities can make to “political associations” to 20,000 NIS a year. The second bill, proposed by MK Faina Kirshenbaum of Yisrael Beitanu, imposes a 45% tax on donations from foreign state entities to Israeli NGOs that are unsponsored by the government.

Many Israeli NGOs do not receive funding from the Israeli government because of their work with the Palestinian Arab minority. They are forced to rely on foreign state entities, like the EU and European government-sponsored organizations, for a majority of their funding. Thus, if passed, these bills would severely affect the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, which depends on NGOs for the promotion and protection of their rights.

While the NGO bills directly hinder the ability of Arab and human rights NGOs to operate independently within Israel, right-wing organizations that violate international law by supporting settlements in the West Bank are not limited in the proposed legislation. Most right-wing organizations are funded by the State and/or foreign private donations, which the bills’ sponsors do not consider foreign interference. It is clear that the proposed legislation would conceal the State’s human rights violations and advance the government’s right-wing agenda without impediment.

The Mossawa Center is extremely concerned that if the NGO bills are passed in the Knesset, Arab and human rights NGOs in Israel will be forced to close down, and, as a result, civil society in Israel will be irreparably damaged. The Mossawa Center calls on the international community to highlight the threat these bills pose to Israel’s legal responsibilities to protect human rights. The NGO bills have the potential to violate human rights clauses in agreements such as the EU Association Agreement and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the US has also ratified.

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For more information: Jafar Farah at TheMossawaCenter@gmail.com or +972 (0)4 855 5901