

BADIL's Oral Statement,

UNHRC, 50th, Item #3 (24 June 2022):

Shrinking Space: Freedom of Opinion and Expression

As a result of the Israeli and its proxy Zionist groups' strategy to silence dissenting voices of its colonial apartheid system, many International bodies and States have adopted restrictive and punitive legislations and policies that are actively shrinking the space for advocates for Palestinian rights.

Responding to Israeli and proxy Zionist groups' pressure, states and international bodies have adopted the IHRA's Working Definition of Anti-Semitism across all fields of policy and passed legislation criminalizing the Palestinian BDS movement. Such actions constitute a blatant attack on freedom of expression under international law and serve to suppress criticism of Israeli human rights violations and international crimes.

By equating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, and BDS as a form of terrorism, Israel has effectively intimidated, silenced and censored human rights defenders and activists advocating for Palestinian rights. By succumbing to the Israeli pressure, the international community is not only violating the universal right to freedom of expression, but also furthering the oppression of the Palestinian people and fortifying the Israeli colonial-apartheid system.

As such, BADIL calls on the HRC and its member states to respect the right to freedom of expression of advocates for Palestinian rights, cease adoption and implementation of the IHRA Working Definition, re-affirm BDS as a legitimate form of non-armed resistance, and uphold their international responsibilities towards the Palestinian people.