



US: In Three States, Federal Courts Struck Down Laws Suppressing Boycotts of Israeli Products

US District Judge Robert Pitman, an appointee of Barack Obama, ruled against a law in Texas that would prevent the state from doing business with companies that supported the boycott of goods from Israel. The court ruled that such a law violates freedom of speech and threatens to “manipulate the public debate through coercion rather than persuasion.” More than half of US states have such laws on the books. Federal courts have struck down similar anti-boycott laws in Kansas and Arizona. The ACLU says the three courts protected the right to boycott under the First Amendment. -GEG

In 2017, Texas became one of more than two dozen states to [pass a law or have taken some sort of executive action explicitly targeting](#)

the pro-Palestinian boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement. The

Texas statute barred the state from doing business with companies

involved in the movement. The free speech concerns here are rather

obvious, and on Thursday night, a federal judge ruled against the law.

U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Texas Robert Pitman, an appointee of Barack Obama, [delivered an injunction to the Texas law](#)

on Thursday night. The lead plaintiff, Bahia Amawi, is an Austrian-born

American citizen and speech pathologist with family members in Palestine. Due to her support of BDS, Amawi had refused to sign a

contract with a local school district for whom she had worked for nearly

a decade which explicitly said she wouldn't boycott Israel, and thus

was forced to end her relationship with the school district.

In

his opinion, Pitman directly took on the fact that just five lawmakers

in the entire Texas legislature voted against the bill. "Texas touts

these numbers as the statute's strength," Pitman wrote, in finding that

the law violates the First Amendment. "They are, rather, its weakness."

Later, he wrote that "the statute threatens 'to suppress unpopular

ideas' and 'manipulate the public debate through coercion rather than

persuasion.' This the First Amendment does not allow."

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Additional source:

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/free-speech/congress-laws-suppressing-boycotts-israel-are-unconstitutional-sincerely-three>