**Testimony in opposition to Senate File 247/House File 400:**

**“No Boycott of Israel: Vendor required to not engage in discrimination against Israel.”**

I am a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis who taught Sacred Scripture at the University of St. Thomas and was the first director of its program in justice and peace studies. I first visited Israel in 1968, shortly after the Six Day War, while I was studying for my doctorate in theology in Rome. From 1974-76, I carried on graduate studies in Sacred Scripture in Jerusalem. I returned in 1990 on a study tour with university-level scholars in peace studies. I spent three weeks in Gaza in August 2005 with a nonviolent peace team, and three months in the fall of 2007 with another nonviolent peace team. I have interacted extensively with Jews, Muslims, and many varieties of Christians.

During my service with the peace team in the fall of 2007, we spent several nights with Palestinian farmers and shepherds in the tents and caves that they had moved to after the Israeli Defense Forces destroyed their masonry homes. We visited Susiya near the southern border of the West bank in response to a phone message that the neighboring settlers had sawed down an orchard of 23 productive olive trees overnight. When we arrived, we met a United Nations representative who had come to investigate the situation. I said to him, “It must be hard to see things like this.” He responded, “Yes, it is very hard. We are allowed to go anywhere and see anything so long as we do nothing!”

Americans are not being asked to protect a stable and just situation in Israel. Rather, the government of Israel, its army and police, and uncontrolled settlers are carrying on a progressive and accelerating ethnic cleansing of non-Jews through destruction of homes, orchards, and infrastructure; seizure of farmland, water, and other productive resources; unreasonable restrictions on movement and normal life; arbitrary murder and administrative detention. The aim is to produce an apartheid Greater Israel, including the occupied territories, which by law privileges Jews, minimizes the number of non-Jews, and denies those non-Jews effective control over the circumstances of their lives. This racist project violates international law.

If people who in conscience oppose this project are not allowed to use the *nonviolent*tools of boycott, divestment, and sanctions to resist it, what tools*should* they be allowed to use?

Please don’t protect a racist ethnic cleansing.

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