



לשוויון ושיתופות ע"ר. למساواة والشراكة ح.م.
Sikkuy-Aufoq For a Shared and Equal Society R.A.

February 2024

Sikkuy-Aufoq's position on the proposed bill for the Prohibition of Hiring Teaching Staff and the Denial of Budgets from Educational Institutions due to Identification with a Terrorist Act or Organization

We at the Sikkuy-Aufoq association call for an immediate cessation of the bill's promotion. The proposed bill marks educators as a suspicious population prone to incitement and support for terrorism. It will severely damage the freedom of expression of teachers and faculty members in the education system, both directly and through the deterrent effect its approval will create. The atmosphere of fear and persecution will strengthen among all teachers and, in particular, among educators from Arab society. This will harm their ability to educate for critical thinking, dialogue, equality and partnership between Arabs and Jews in educational institutions. The bill seeks to exclude budgets from educational institutions, thereby endangering students bound by the Compulsory Education Law and educational staff with the loss of their place of employment. Additionally, the bill seeks to change the accepted dismissal procedure, thus violating teachers' employment agreements.

In this document, we will present the implications of the proposed amendments to the law and their impact on educators:

1. **Marking educators as a suspicious population prone to incitement and support for terrorism:** The supporters of the bill claim that the rationale behind it is the need to deal with repeated cases of support for "acts of terrorism" by teachers and faculty members in the education system. Senior officials in the Ministries of Education and Justice and the General Security Service have repeatedly stated that the educators' population does not require monitoring and investigation for suspicion of terrorism and incitement, and the cases handled by the ministry in the past year were isolated cases.





לשווייון ושותפות ע"ר. למساواة والشراكة ح.م.
Sikkuy-Aufoq For a Shared and Equal Society R.A.

2. Expanding the offense of supporting terrorism beyond what is defined in the Counter-Terrorism Law: Expanding the definition of what constitutes an act of terrorism creates vague concepts subject to a broad interpretation not anchored in law. This endangers the freedom of expression and the ability of educators to educate and is a danger to the entire education system and students. In recent months, we have witnessed several cases in which social media posts were taken out of context and for which teachers were accused of supporting and praising terrorism, which led to persecution and incitement. Still, in the end, the cases were found to be baseless.

3. Denial of budgets by the Ministry of Education and the local authority from educational institutions where there is support and incitement to terrorism: In the Education Committee's discussions, the Ministry of Finance officials presented the problems and dangers inherent in this section. They stated that denying a budget from an institution due to an offense of expression is a precedent and does not appear in the Ministry of Finance's financial sanctions manual. It is a collective punishment which harms the institution's students and professional staff due to behavior for which they are not complicit or responsible. Moreover, it creates additional problems, including the need to provide for the hundreds of students remaining without a framework and the payment of the wages of all the teachers employed in the institution. Thus, this is a far-reaching process.

4. Violation of the teachers' employment agreements: Teaching staff are included under the civil servants' agreements, under which disciplinary and administrative procedures are accepted in The Civil Service Law (Discipline), 1963, The State Education Law and The School Supervision Law. This legislative amendment seeks to exclude the teachers and allow the Director General of the Ministry of Education to dismiss without advanced notice and severance pay in the case of incitement and support for terrorism. Moreover, this will be at his sole "discretion" and even in the absence of a conviction. These powers are currently vested in the Labor Court and the Disciplinary Division. The bill's initiator refused to accept a clause the Ministry of Justice added, "A decision according to this section requires consultation with the Attorney General or his/her representative", as is customary in the process of





לשוויין ושותפות ע"ר. למساواة والشراكة ح.م.
Sikkuy-Aufoq For a Shared and Equal Society R.A.

offenses for incitement and support for terrorism. He requested that the authority be concentrated solely in the hands of the Director General.

5. The state of educators from the Arab society: although the bill applies to the entire population, it is possible to understand the intention of the legislator, that is, the target population, through the examples brought up by him in the discussions and the explanatory notes to the Bill. The bill fuels the phenomenon of persecution and incitement against educational staff in general and Arabs in particular. The Education Committee can promote an educational discourse on the role of educators during a complex and ongoing crisis and demand the provision of tools for dialogue to strengthen solidarity and social resilience. Still, instead, it chooses to promote legislation that intensifies mistrust, fear, and societal alienation.

6. The bill initiator seeks to establish in legislation an area already being addressed, and without being asked to do so by the professional bodies: During the debates on the bill, the professional bodies were repeatedly asked whether the existing legislation has the tools to monitor, suspend and even dismiss a teaching employee convicted of support and incitement. The answer from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education's representatives was the same - in the existing law, there is a solution to the problem, and it has even been used.

7. The state of the education system: The education system is in an acute crisis that began even before the October 7 events, including a shortage of teachers, the state of special education, incidents of violence, educational and material gaps, and more. The situation has worsened since the outbreak of the war, when, among other things, tens of thousands of students were evacuated from their homes, and a significant cut in the state education budget is expected. The education system needs strengthening and rehabilitation and not unnecessary political confrontation.

Therefore, this bill, which is currently on the table of the Knesset's Education Committee for its first reading, constitutes a severe violation of the principles of freedom of expression, partnership and equality, the status of teachers and their rights, and the ability of the education system and education personnel to engage in their primary work.

