

# Abby Martin Sues State of Georgia Over Law Requiring Pledge of Allegiance to Israel



By [Alan MacLeod](#) | [MintPressNews.com](#) | [Creative Commons](#)

([MPN](#)) – After refusing to sign a pledge of allegiance to the state of Israel, the state of Georgia shut down a media literacy conference featuring journalist and filmmaker [Abby Martin](#) at Georgia Southern University. Martin had recently released a documentary critical of the Israeli government called “[Gaza Fights for Freedom.](#)”

Now she is suing the state, claiming the decision is a violation of the First Amendment. Along with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF), today she filed a federal free-speech lawsuit against the university system of Georgia.

Martin was dismayed by the university's decision: "This censorship of my talk based on forced compliance to anti-BDS laws in Georgia is just one level of a nationwide campaign to protect Israel from grassroots pressure. We must stand firmly opposed to these efforts and not cower in fear of these blatant violations of free speech," she [said](#).

*After I was scheduled to give keynote speech at an upcoming [@GeorgiaSouthern](#) conference, organizers said I must comply w/ Georgia's anti-BDS law & sign a contractual pledge to not boycott Israel. I refused & my talk was canceled. The event fell apart after colleagues supported me*

*– Abby Martin (@AbbyMartin) [January 11, 2020](#)*

Twenty-eight states have already mandated loyalty pledges to Israel as a means to outlaw dissent. But in December, President Trump passed legislation [effectively criminalizing](#) the [Boycott Divestments and Sanctions](#) (BDS) movement that aims to put pressure on the Jewish state through economic activity, along the lines of the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa. The law mandates that any public institution would be subject to losing all funding if the government deems that they are not doing enough to stamp out anti-Semitism, which, it explicitly states, includes any criticism of the Israeli government. In December, *MintPress* reported that the British government under Boris Johnson is [planning](#) to introduce similar legislation.

"The hyperbolic notion that conservatives are the ones being persecuted on college campuses has made blatant censorship campaigns against people for criticism of Israel, or other progressive protests, go completely ignored," Martin [wrote](#).

CAIR's Legal Defense Fund Senior Litigation Attorney Gadeir Abbas [said](#),

*There is no place where free speech is more important than on campus. And this attempt to suppress Abby's views – denying students, academics, and others from hearing her lecture – is as brazen as it is illegal. In adopting this anti-BDS law, Georgia has prioritized the policy preferences of a foreign country over the free speech rights of Americans, like Abby, who speak on this state's college campuses."*

The PCJF likened the BDS movement to the boycotts of the civil rights movement in the mid-twentieth century, it's Executive Director Mara Verheyden-Hilliard described the laws as "extraordinary, outrageous, illegal and unconstitutional." In 1956 Martin Luther King and his movement were criminalized for carrying out boycotts, as Southern states passed legislation to penalize their behavior, only for it to be later struck down by the Supreme Court. This is what Martin and the alliance of non-governmental organizations are hoping will happen here too. Why should I have to "contractually pledge loyalty to a foreign country?" she asked at her press conference today.

In 2016, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal signed a law requiring any person or organization entering into a contract with the state worth at least \$1,000 sign an oath promising that they would not oppose the Israeli government in any fashion. CAIR has reason to believe they could overturn the law its Georgia Executive Director, Edward Ahmed Mitchell, called "blatantly and hilariously unconstitutional."

In 2018, Bahia Amawi, a Houston-based children's speech pathologist who worked with autistic, speech-impaired and other developmentally disabled children, lost her job after she refused to sign a similar document. Amawi had been at her job for nine years previously without a problem. CAIR took up Amawi's case and managed to overturn every Texas boycott law on the grounds of their unconstitutionality and she is now free to return to work. They appear confident of a similar

victory in Georgia.

Martin began as a citizen journalist covering the Occupy movement in her native California. From 2012 to 2015 she hosted the show [Breaking the Set](#) on RT. In the famous D.N.I. report into alleged Russian interference into the 2016 election, the U.S. government [accused](#) her of “promoting radical discontent” in America, something she appears to wear as a badge of honor. Her current documentary series, [Empire Files](#), is broadcast on *TeleSUR English*. However, due to sanctions against the Venezuelan government, *Gaza Fights for Freedom* was crowdfunded. She is also the host of [Media Roots Radio](#).

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