I am a member of the Manchester Local group of Amnesty International and am writing to you as my local representative to express my concern about the government’s Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) bill and the danger it presents to local democracy. The main provision in the Bill is a prohibition on public bodies (including but not restricted to local government bodies) being influenced by “political or moral disapproval of foreign state conduct” when taking procurement and investment decisions.

The bill will limit the ability of public bodies to make ethical choices about spending and investment thereby preventing them from incentivising positive change with respect to human rights, climate goals and international law.

The bill will shield companies engaged in human rights abuse or environmental destruction by preventing public bodies from cutting financial ties with them over abusive or illegal actions committed in a foreign state, unless expressly permitted to do so by the government.

The bill takes a particular position on Israel, which is the **only** state that cannot be excluded from the prohibition. Every other state and territory in the world may be exempted from the main provision by the government. This extraordinary state of affairs demonstrates that one of the motivations behind the bill is to prevent the highlighting of human rights abuses currently being committed by the Israeli government against Palestinians.

Furthermore, the bill treats the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the same way as Israel, potentially conferring legitimacy on Israel's annexation of these territories and contravening the UK's endorsement of UN Resolution 2334, which requires states to distinguish between the State of Israel and territories which it has occupied since 1967. The bill would prohibit local authorities from being able to consider the human rights implications of procurement and investment relating to Israel's illegal settlements.

While the main focus of the bill is on commercial decisions, it contains a broader threat to freedom of speech by preventing public officials (e.g. councillors) from speaking out about ethical issues. The bill allows for an enforcement regime, including a process of quasi-judicial review, which could be used to prevent or punish councillors making statements about ethical issues (even when they have been prevented by the law from acting on their convictions). This provision would amount to interference with the right to freedom of expression as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Finally, of particular concern to those working for local councils, the bill would violate the rights of Local Government Pension Scheme members by preventing them from choosing how their deferred wages are to be invested.

The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill is a deeply flawed and antidemocratic bill which undermines human rights. I hope that you will give careful consideration to the effects that the bill would have, should it become law, on your freedom as an individual and on the Council to take decisions.

I am asking you to take two actions:

* Please write to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and to the Prime Minister detailing your concerns about this bill.
* Please consider putting a motion to the Council expressing concern about your powers being constrained by this bill.

In case it is helpful to you, here are links to two pages on Amnesty International UK’s website, where you will find additional useful information.

[AIUK Briefing – Economic Activity Bill (amnesty.org.uk)](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2023-06/Amnesty%20International%20UK%20Briefing%20-%20Economic%20Activity%20of%20Public%20Bodies%20Bill%5B27%5D_1.pdf?VersionId=J3XcaLkQ7I197eyhCM1GwzUTkIfVNEeH)

[UK: new bill to ban councils from adopting ethical procurement policies condemned as 'outrageous' | Amnesty International UK](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-new-bill-ban-councils-adopting-ethical-procurement-policies-condemned-outrageous)

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter

Yours sincerely

(Name, address, postcode)

**Use these links to find your local councillors**

Manchester

 [https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0 [democracy.manchester.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/democracy.manchester.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJkNM4Dp-k$)

Salford

 [https://sccdemocracy.salford.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0 [sccdemocracy.salford.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/sccdemocracy.salford.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJk8uKgWEk$)

Bolton

 [https://www.democracy.bolton.gov.uk/cmis5/People.aspx [democracy.bolton.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.democracy.bolton.gov.uk/cmis5/People.aspx__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJklco93xQ$)

Wigan

 [https://democracy.wigan.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0&a=1 [democracy.wigan.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/democracy.wigan.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0&a=1__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJk3BoW_zQ$)

Bury

 [https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?VW=TABLE&PIC=1&FN=WARD [councildecisions.bury.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?VW=TABLE&PIC=1&FN=WARD__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJkCDxThww$)

Rochdale

 [https://democracy.rochdale.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0 [democracy.rochdale.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/democracy.rochdale.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJky3GAeko$)

Oldham

 [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/councillors/ward [oldham.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.oldham.gov.uk/councillors/ward__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJk_2WVZVY$)

Tameside

 [https://tameside.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0 [tameside.moderngov.co.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/tameside.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJkfQPNkEo$)

Stockport

 [https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0 [democracy.stockport.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJk5dQ4aEI$)

Trafford

 [https://democratic.trafford.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD [democratic.trafford.gov.uk]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/democratic.trafford.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD__;!!PDiH4ENfjr2_Jw!GZyeodzenehvfTMpmSSeNAHsM_IjBNW0DkRsXR84A2pOPb-vWsD8TQb03WGIGPLp5mRN0h10iXuehVBT12rlWAXcFgJkOhY0oBY$)