

*Boycott, Divestment,
Sanctions (BDS)*

An Introduction

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This Introduction to BDS has borrowed from the writings of Jon Haber, Julie Bernstein, the JCPA, DJ Schneeweiss, The Reut Institute, NGO Monitor, Peter Wertheim and the ECAJ, Irwin Cotler and others, who have written cogently on this subject and contributed significantly to the development of global understanding of the nature of BDS and the most effective means to combat it.

Introduction

The modern ideological assault on Israel began in earnest at the 2001 UN Conference Against Racism in Durban. Driven by NGOs in the Middle East and throughout the world, and fuelled by a continuous flow of inaccurate charges of human rights violations and malicious comparisons of Israel to apartheid South Africa and even to Nazi Germany, this campaign willfully distorts the history and national aspirations of the Jewish people, ignores and often denies the legitimate right of Israel to defend itself from terror and carry out the normal functions of a sovereign state.

Increasingly, these attacks on Israel have carried a false imprimatur of international law, in which misinformation is used to pass resolutions in international bodies accusing Israel of violating universally accepted conventions and norms. Such attacks are then used as a basis for justifying international isolation, economic sanction, and the prosecution of Israeli officials. Frequently, deficiencies in Israel's record are exaggerated while those of its adversaries are minimized or ignored. The many ways in which Israel has sought peace with its neighbours and to comply with international norms and conventions, as well as the ongoing hostility, absolutism and violence cultivated and deployed against Israel by its enemies, tend to be minimized or overlooked entirely.

It is within this framework, in which Israel is repeatedly blamed regardless of the truth, that

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anti-Israel activists have developed BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) as a tactic to mobilize action to isolate Israel internationally and undermine its legitimacy and its ability to conduct normal international exchanges. Common to most BDS calls are distortions and outright fabrications of facts, misrepresentations of international law, and a false assertion that the proffered action somehow will further the realization of Palestinian rights. Often, the very existence of a state for the Jewish people is presented as a moral stain on international society, with the obvious corollary that Israel's demise is an outcome to be desired and promoted.

The spheres and arenas in which the BDS movement operates include, but are not limited to, campus and academia, churches, civic institutions, the corporate world (particularly investment houses), labor unions and culture and the arts. The danger of the

movement lies less in the short-lived impact of specific actions in these various spheres; rather, unless effectively countered, over time it may have the corrosive effect of changing the culture of political discussion surrounding Israel, making it harder for people of goodwill to publicly support the Jewish state. If support for Israel begins to be seen as normatively questionable, this could also provide fertile ground for the growth of anti-Semitism.

Origins

The BDS “movement” began in 2001 at the now-notorious United Nations Durban conference, where anti-Israeli forces hijacked an event originally designed to deal with the global fight against racism, turning it into an unprecedented hate-fest targeting the Jewish state.

While the media at the time covered the hijacking of Durban’s official UN conference, less attention was paid to the associated meeting of Non-Governmental Organizations (or NGOs) which brought together for the first time many disparate anti-Israel organizations from around the world. It was at this NGO meeting that the “Apartheid Strategy”, a propaganda campaign designed to “brand” Israel as the heir of Apartheid South Africa, was born. The tactic developed to implement this strategy and give it concrete expression and political purpose would be that of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

**NGO Declaration, World Conference against Racism, Racial
Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban,
September 2001:**

Call for... adoption of all measures... employed against the South African Apartheid regime (Article 418)

Call for the launch of an international anti Israeli Apartheid movement as implemented against South African Apartheid through a global solidarity campaign network of international civil society (Article 424)

Impose a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state...the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel (Article 425)

Most current BDS campaigns claim the “movement” originated with the 2005 call from “Palestinian civil society” to engage in boycotts and divestment. While this may simply be a way to make the long string of losses they experienced during the early years disappear, the 2005 call engineered and published on July 9th of that year by a coalition of 170 Palestinian organizations in Israel, the Palestinian Authority and overseas, entitled “The Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Against Israel” also allows BDS proponents both to blur their toxic association with the 2001 Durban Conference and to present themselves as responding to a genuine call for assistance and mobilization from within Palestinian society. The truth, however, is a little different.

The notion of BDS welling up from the Palestinian grassroots certainly gives the “movement” more credibility than its real origin at the long-discredited UN’s 2001 Durban I “anti-racism” conference. But a quick look at who makes up the 170 organizations listed in the boycott call reveals some interesting details. Firstly, the organization that tops the list of supporting “Unions, Associations, Campaigns” is the Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine, a coalition that includes Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and some of the more violent sub-sets of Fatah. While it is possible that everyone signing the list did so out of unvarnished solidarity, it is also appropriate to note that it is probably much easier for the Islamic Forces Council to get the Palestinian Dentist’s Association to agree to its requests, rather than vice versa. Also, it turns out that at least 10-15% of the signatories come from organizations outside Israel and the territories, including over 20 organizations from surrounding countries (13 from Syria, 6 from Lebanon and 2 from Jordan) and another 9 from Europe or North America. Now it may be that some or all of these are refugee or diaspora groups, but given the large Syrian contingent in the boycotters’ roster, the notion that we’re talking entirely about un-coerced volunteers becomes questionable. The potential that this “Civil Society” boycott call arises from coercion within Palestinian society or even reflects a manufactured image of civil society organizations which are actually fronts for terror and other political groups (as opposed to being a consensus welling up from the grass roots) also points out an interesting paradox. The claim that Israel uniquely deserves the BDS treatment is, to a certain extent, based on Israel supposedly being exceptional with regard to its level of human rights abuses. And yet the organizations making the boycott call can only be seen as legitimately representing Palestinian civic society if Israel’s “repression” does not extend to eliminating such civic space in both Israel and the territories.

The True Nature of BDS – Strategic Mission

The objective of the BDS campaign, regardless of the naïve and well-intentioned wishes of some of its supporters, is to to brand Israel a criminal state, isolate it internationally and thus clear the way for its eventual destruction. BDS thus forms an operational part of the broader ideological assault on Israel's legitimacy, a hallmark feature of which is the criminalization of the very existence of the state, divorced from any specific policy or action.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), a key arm of the BDS campaign, has defined the objectives of BDS as follows:

1. Ending Israel’s occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

It is important to deconstruct these demands so as to understand their true import:

1. “all Arab lands”

- This statement, which fails to define the parameters of the term “all Arab lands,” leaves wide open the likelihood that the proponents are not arguing for Israel to retreat to the 4 June 1967 lines, but rather that its very existence within the 1949 ceasefire lines is in itself an occupation which must be ended. The intentional vagueness of the formula is a well-established tool of anti-Israel propagandists designed to cloak their true agenda in terms easily palatable to western ears.

BDS in practice rejects the internationally-endorsed principle of two states for two peoples

2. “fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality”

- Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, or Israeli-Arabs, already have the same *civil* rights as Jewish Israelis under Israeli law. Therefore, this statement suggests the proponents are asserting Palestinian *national* rights to self-determination throughout the State of Israel, thus challenging the legitimate Jewish character of the state.

3. “the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194”

- The demand for a “right to return” is a euphemism for dissolving the State of Israel as the sovereign nation-state of the Jewish people through demographic means.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 194, which was passed near the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, addresses ways to handle the refugee challenges created in that war. The resolution does not use “rights language,” saying only that the refugees “should” (not “must”) be allowed to return to their homes. The resolution neither affirms nor denies that this is a matter of right. Moreover, Resolution 194 *does not* support an unconditional return. Rather, it implies that in order to return, the refugee must be willing to live at peace.
- Full implementation of the demand for a “right to return” is a prescription for continued bloody conflict, not peace, insofar as it would grant a permanent Palestinian claim on the State of Israel, in effect both subverting and inverting the peacemaking principle of two states for two peoples into a two states for one people absurdity. Such an eventuality would rightly be opposed by an overwhelming majority of Israelis.

Thus, even as it presents its objectives in terms of Palestinian rights, BDS in practice rejects the internationally-endorsed principle of two states for two peoples and is at odds with the global consensus recognizing Israel's right to exist specifically as the nation-state of the Jewish people, as legitimately created under international law and the UN Charter.

In Their Own Words

- In an article entitled 'Our South Africa Moment has Arrived,' Omar Barghouti writes that, "The conceptual origins of Israel's unique form of apartheid are found in Zionism, a racist European ideology that was adopted by the dominant stream of the Zionist movement in order to justify and recruit political support for its colonial project of establishing an exclusive Jewish state in historic Palestine." ([Scottish PSC](#), 03/19/09).
- Dr. Haider Eid, lecturer at Al Aqsa University in Gaza and activist for the one-state solution, argues that, "With pressure imposed by the international community through a BDS campaign *a la* anti-Apartheid campaign which brought Apartheid South Africa to an end, we believe that Israel itself can be transformed into a secular democratic state after the return of 6 million Palestinian refugees who were ethnically cleansed in 1948, a state for ALL of its citizens...therefore, we think that one of the major tools of the struggle towards a secular democratic state is BDS." ([Electronic Intifada](#), 11/18/09). Ahmed Moor: "So BDS does mean the end of the Jewish state...I view the BDS movement as a long-term project with radically transformative potential... the success of the BDS movement is tied directly to our success in humanizing Palestinians and discrediting Zionism as a legitimate way of regarding the world." ([Mondoweiss](#), 04/22/10).
- Writing in the context of Israeli Apartheid Week, Ronnie Kasrils, former activist against the apartheid regime in South Africa and supporter of BDS, argues that "BDS represents three words that will help bring about the defeat of Zionist Israel and victory for Palestine." ([Media Monitor Network](#), 03/17/09).
- American academic and supporter of the one-state paradigm and the BDS Movement Virginia Tilley writes that, "A coordinated movement of divestment, sanctions, and boycotts against Israel must convene to contain not only Israel's aggressive acts and crimes against humanitarian law but also, as in South Africa, its founding racist logics that inspired and still drive the entire Palestinian problem." ([Scottish PSC](#), 04/06/09).
- BDS does not aim for either a one or two state solution, but for Palestinian rights... Whether that is in one state for both peoples or two sovereign, democratic states side by side has yet to be decided. The movement is consistently neutral on this, regardless of the diverse personal political views held by its various spokespeople http://www.palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=16985
- "I clearly do not buy into the two-state solution... If the refugees were to return, you would not have a two-state solution. You would have a Palestine next to a Palestine, rather than a Palestine next to Israel."
See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifZLk6Ei9-U>:
- In another interview at the same link, Barghouti stated: "If the occupation ends, would that end our call for BDS? No it wouldn't."
- He wrote an even more damning piece in Electronic Intifada on 31 May 2009: "...people fighting for refugee rights like I am, know that you cannot reconcile the right of return for refugees with a two state solution. That is the big white elephant in the room and people are ignoring it - a return for refugees would end Israel's existence as a Jewish state.": <http://electronicintifada.net/content/boycotts-work-interview-omarbarghouti/8263>
- Barghouti claims that these public statements are only his "personal" views, not those of the global BDS movement which he leads. Yet Barghouti's views are in conspicuous conformity with those of other BDS leaders like Ali Abuminah and Ronny Kasrils.

The True Nature of BDS – Tactics and Methods

In the service of the strategic objective of bringing about Israel's destruction, the BDS campaign focuses on establishing hostility to Israel and rejection of normal exchanges with it as a normative position in public and international affairs. It does so through a clear set of operational strategies and tactics.

The most fundamental of these is the repeated attempt by the BDS movement to insinuate itself onto mainstream civic organizations. When anti-Israel activists refuse to buy Israeli products they are simply making unremarkable personal choices. And organizations with names like The Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) or Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) insisting that Israel be boycotted are rightly seen as partisan organizations playing out their own marginal agendas. But what if Leeds University, or the Presbyterian Church, or a respected union, a historic city or well-known retail chain took part in the BDS program? Well, that would allow anti-Israel activists to punch significantly above their weight, claiming that their efforts were supported by individuals and organizations far better known, and more highly regarded than the activists themselves. This then is the objective of BDS activists: to get their message to come out of the mouth of a well-known institution. This explains the tremendous efforts they have exerted trying to get such organizations on board and the even more extreme efforts made when an organization decides to jump off the BDS wagon. It explains the questionable tactics (including manipulation of civic organizations and outright fraud) adopted in many instances

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Not only do BDS activists try to insinuate themselves into mainstream organizations, but they also endlessly instrumentalize famous and/or iconic figures (including and especially, if Jewish or if famous for having fought oppression in other countries) and any word they ever utter against Israel. South African activist and Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu is one of the most striking examples; former French Resistance Fighter and Diplomat Stephane Hessel is another and more recent one. This tactic also explains the intense effort (often verging on harassment) invested by BDS proponents to convince (indeed, often to bully) artists scheduled to travel and perform in Israel, to cancel their performances

This points us to the second defining quality of BDS operations: BDS is in large part a propaganda strategy. Its goal is to transform the political consensus regarding Israel, both through willfully misrepresenting everything about Israel and its circumstances, and through creating the impression that the BDS approach is both popular and gaining momentum. BDS activists regularly declare victory, even as their maneuvers are rejected time and again. Because the desire to punish Israel economically represents such a small minority of public opinion, publicity is often the only tangible "achievement" that BDS activists can point to. Their true objective is to infuse a campus or other institution with their "Israel equals apartheid" messaging, attempting to make this slander stick, even if boycott or divestment motions themselves get defeated (as they have been, time and time again). The value for the BDS movement of a union endorsement of BDS, say, apart from the ability to access the said union's members through endorsed mail-outs and so on, is not in the actual

implementation of a boycott of Israeli companies or institutions, but in the fact of the endorsement and the publicity and campaigning opportunities it provides.

BDS seeks to portray its platform as the only moral course of action available to people concerned about the plight of the Palestinians. It promotes a binary, black-and-white vision of the Middle East situation designed to define out of the discussion any nuance or possibility that Israel may have a case or a justification for its behavior, or, indeed, for existing at all.

BDS is presented by its advocates as a profoundly nonviolent popular resistance movement, adopting rights-based language, focusing on human rights, justice, international law and equality. They also stress that BDS strongly rejects all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. The constant use of such rights-based, nonviolent and tolerant vocabulary is a strategy designed to blur the lines between legitimate criticism on the one hand (the way they portray themselves) and actions designed to undermine the very legitimacy of Israel's existence (their strategic purpose). BDS presents itself as the latter-day heir to Gandhi, the most famous anti-colonial figure in history, thus hiding the true hostility of their anti-Israel agenda.

BDS serves as the dominant organizing tool for the anti-Israel forces active today in Western society.

BDS serves as the dominant organizing tool for the anti-Israel forces active today in Western society. It is a means through which to mobilize new recruits, develop campaigning capacities in social media, raise funds, and build a sense of common purpose amongst what are, ultimately, very disparate groups. Seen in this light, BDS is less of a tool to beat Israel and more a tool for making anti-Israeli forces feel empowered.

During the course of 2011, a process of convergence was underway, through which BDS activism was joined to more globally focused attempts at direct action activities designed to challenge Israel's borders and security perimeter directly. This trend towards high-profile (and heavily-invested) direct actions such as the flotillas and "flytillas" may have taken some energy and focus out of local BDS efforts in different countries.

The BDS movement – who are they?

BDS is made up in large part by activists from radical left organizations and Islamist groups active in the west, as well as so-called post- or anti-Zionist Jews and Israelis. This array is often referred to as the Red-Green (or even Red-Green-Blue) Alliance:

The dominant "organization" in the BDS Movement is the Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions Campaign National Committee (BNC), which is composed of Palestinian NGOs and whose main internet platform is <http://bdsmovement.net>. Other key engines and proponents include [PACBI](#), [the Electronic Intifada website](#) and its founder, [Ali Abunimah](#), Tel Aviv graduate student [Omar Barghouti](#), the [Palestine Solidarity Campaign](#), and others.

There is no doubt that many of these groups draw inspiration and support from the Palestinian Authority (as well as the plethora of anti-Zionist organizations and websites).

However, the Movement is not organized in a hierarchal structure, and operates as a network that is driven by few catalysts – individuals or organizations that initiate activities that are then shared, amplified and copied across the eco-system of interested and engaged activists.

BDS at work

BDS campaigns rarely play themselves out between boycott and divestment advocates on one side and Israel and its supporters on the other. Instead, they tend to play out within communities such as college and university campuses, church meeting rooms and pews, City Hall or Local Council chambers, union halls and the boardrooms of corporations and charities. It is these civic spaces that the BDS movement seeks to turn into new fronts in the Middle East conflict, often with a heavy price tag for the organization in question.

But for all their bluster, the practical record of BDS "victories" is bare. After ten years of tirelessly advocating for divestment on college campuses, not one university has sold a single share of stock targeted by divestment advocates or adopted a formal academic boycott. Churches that once embraced a BDS position have reconsidered and rejected BDS multiple times. Municipalities and non-profits (such as cooperative food markets) have consistently said no to boycott advocates.

Defeating these motions often takes much work and focused lobbying, particularly given the obsessive and politically determined nature of much BDS activity. Experience shows that successful efforts to combat BDS draw from some common strategies, particularly the importance of building solid relationships with decision-makers and opinion elites, and the use of messages and approaches tailored to each particular sphere. Most of the time, the rejection of BDS comes from wise souls within the targeted civic organization who understand the true price they are being asked to pay.

The BDS movement seeks to turn civic spaces into new fronts in the Middle East conflict

Key examples of success in fending off BDS motions and maneuvers include Somerville (US, 2004), AUT (UK, 2005), TIAA-CREF Pension Fund (US, every year since 2005), Trondheim University (Norway, 2009), Berkeley (US, 2010), Davis Co-op (US, 2010), and Marrickville (Australia, 2011). For a more complete list of BDS failures, see [Divest This](#).

A decade of failure has reduced BDS activists to resorting to divestment hoaxes and a focus on increasingly marginal targets to keep their campaign alive. Nevertheless, those committed to denying and

assailing Israel's legitimacy do not rest. They are ready to absorb losses and continue to look for new targets of opportunity, to reconfigure their tactics, to exploit weaknesses of civic organizations and to capitalize on any progress they make (no matter how trivial or temporary). At the same time, this process of adaptation has also led to greater sophistication in some instances, and more strategic (and less public) targeting of possible arenas, including local government.

The Costs of BDS

BDS has been repelled at most if not all of the institutions where it has been attempted. But the cost has been high, more often than not to the institution in question rather than to Israel.

Whenever an institution has accepted a BDS proposal, the results have been rancor, division and conflict within the organization. Divestment advocates who manage to convince (or trick) an organization into buying into BDS will pocket their (often brief) win, leaving the organization behind to deal with the wreckage left in the wake of a boycott or divestment debate.

In financial or commercial terms, despite over ten years of constant agitation, the BDS record is lame to say the least. As highlighted by [Divest This](#), Israel's economy continues to flourish, with foreign investment growing consistently, whereas BDS efforts to target supermarket chains, global companies invested in Israel or particular Israeli exporters consistently fail. True to the propagandistic nature of the entire BDS project, but also perhaps simply because they are unable to come to terms with their inability to advance concrete boycotts, BDS activists [regularly claim](#) commercially-related victories even as the clear evidence and the [statements](#) of the commercial institutions in question suggest [otherwise](#).

Ultimately, though, Israel and its supporters do pay a price, even when BDS fails, insofar as BDS controversies tend to distort debate, demanding discussion only over whether or not Israel should be punished for its “crimes,” rather than pointing out the inaccuracy and unfairness of these very accusations or the responsibility of Israel’s accusers for the situation in the Middle East. Thus BDS tends to crowd out discussions of the complexities of the Middle East situation, let alone all other human rights issues in the region and beyond, while also truncating the space available for pragmatic peaceful engagement.

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It is easy for activists, half a world away from the Middle East, to call for a boycott of products made in Israel or in the West Bank. The boycott they promote doesn't require them to make any personal choices or sacrifices. Many Palestinians, on the other hand, especially those employed in Israeli settlements, would have to pay the price – in lost jobs and declining living standards - for the crusading zeal of their Western “champions”.

An independent poll of Palestinians conducted in June 2010 found that while a majority of 72% supported, and 26% opposed, a boycott of settlements’ products, only 38% of them supported, and 60% opposed, preventing Palestinian laborers from working in settlements. The [poll](#) was carried out by the respected Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, based in Ramallah.

The Palestinians seem to be saying that they want to put the Israeli settlements out of business, but without losing their jobs in those settlements. Clearly they have mixed feelings about a boycott. They support the idea of BDS against settlements in theory, but not in practice.

At present, the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) is the Palestinians' biggest national union grouping and it is the only Palestinian union grouping affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation. It has about 7,000 members but only a small percentage of them have jobs and pay union dues. About half of the PGFTU's dues come from workers employed in Israel or Israeli enterprises in the West Bank and are collected for the PGFTU by the Histadrut.

Statistics published by the Bank of Israel in April 2010 and confirmed by the Palestinian Finance Ministry show that work in Israel is highly important to the Palestinian economy. Some 44,000 West Bank Palestinians worked in Israel or in Israeli enterprises in the West Bank and constitute 14% of the total employed workforce among the residents of the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Total payment by Israeli employers to Palestinian workers came to \$649 million in 2008, which is more than 10% of the Palestinian gross domestic product that year and is also equivalent to total Palestinian exports that year. A further 32,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem worked in Israel or in Israeli enterprises in the West Bank.

The BDS agenda is to establish rejection of normal exchanges with Israel as a normative position in international and public affairs.

The PGFTU has long held out against officially supporting a boycott of West Bank settlements, despite constant pressure from radical forces within the PA and from within the union movement abroad. On 5 December 2010 PGFTU President Shahir Sa'ad announced that Palestinians employed in settlements will not give up their jobs until the Palestinian Authority provides alternative work. The PGFTU leadership understands that what is needed is practical support for efforts to build bridges between Israeli and Palestinian workers and their unions, not boycotts that drive them apart.

Summary

BDS seeks to establish in people's minds the idea that Israel is an unworthy member of the international community and a society with which decent people shouldn't have any contact. **The agenda is to cut Israel and Israelis off from normal discourse and interaction and establish rejection of such normal exchange as a normative position in international and public affairs.**

BDS is a classic propaganda campaign – seeking to turn people against Israel by willfully misrepresenting it and pressing emotive buttons precisely because of their emotiveness, irrespective of their accuracy or appropriateness. BDS campaigns are first and foremost attempts to insert the BDS agenda into people's consciousness. BDS activists are less concerned with actually securing economic or other boycotts than with making sure they get media coverage for their political message.

BDS is a radical, bullying agenda which portrays Israel (and Israelis) as guilty by definition. It does not allow for any debate or discussion surrounding Israel's behavior (let alone the rights and wrongs of any other Middle East or international actor), instead framing the debate solely around actions to be taken to ostracize Israel. In the BDS worldview, there is only one moral path – BDS against Israel.

BDS is part of the larger assault on Israel which includes, amongst other things, the abuse of international law uniquely to single Israel out for legal assault and opprobrium [lawfare], the malicious and mendacious use of the "apartheid" analogy, and the consistent demonization of Israel, its decision-making, its leaders, etc.

BDS is anti-peace: BDS directs its zero-sum approach to any- and everything Israeli, with no regard as to the relevance or effectiveness of this approach in terms of actually advancing peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestinians.

- The proponents of BDS do not speak of peace, reconciliation or coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. Their program is not one of encouraging constructive engagement or bridge-building but one of demonization, zero-sum politics, grandstanding and bullying. For the BDS movement, Israel can do no right, and any Israeli individual or institution is a legitimate target for vilification and ostracization. Claims that calls for BDS are directed merely at the Israeli government are simply untrue, as any perusal of BDS literature and campaigns shows.
- The policy of BDS rejects universally accepted principles of peacemaking and stands in diametric opposition to the policies pursued by the European Union, the Secretary General of the United Nations and other leading international actors who seek to build peace in the Middle East through cooperation, engagement and dialogue, and a peaceful solution based on the principle of two states for two peoples

BDS actively undermines peacemaking: It serves as a distraction from the critical task of trying to bring peace to the Middle East. Moreover, it rewards intransigence by suggesting that international pressure on Israel can replace efforts to negotiate in good faith. These activities detract from the goal of a lasting and solid peace based on co-existence and productive economic relations.

- BDS radicalizes Palestinian discourse, shutting voices of moderation and pragmatism out of the debate.
- BDS targets those engaged in engaging, seeking to undermine and short-circuit exactly those efforts designed to promote mutual recognition of both sides' humanity.
- BDS campaigns actively reject all kinds of peaceful joint initiatives by NGOs or UN agencies aimed at reconciling or encouraging dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples

BDS lacks credibility: Proponents of BDS argue that support is growing for their program of bringing positive change through political and economic exclusion of Israel, yet despite ten years of BDS campaigning:

- Israel's economy and exports continue to grow, and have nearly doubled over the last decade

BDS directs its zero-sum approach to any- and everything Israeli, with no regard as to the relevance or effectiveness of this approach in terms of actually advancing peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestinians.

- Investment in Israel is also growing rapidly and showing no signs of slowing.
- More European venture capital is invested in Israel than in any single European state.
- No single university has adopted the academic boycott BDS so regularly calls for

More and more frequently BDS activists attempt to fill the credibility gap between their claims and their actual achievements with fraud (such as divestment hoaxes) and noise, such as recent efforts to disrupt Israel-related cultural events.

By wrapping itself in the imagery and language of civil and human rights, of non-violent resistance and anti-colonialism, BDS is tapping well-established strains of political thought and activism and channeling them uniquely in the service of a clearly anti-Israel agenda, driven by fundamental hostility to Israel's very existence.

These stunts, together with the movement's claims of growing success, suggest that their criteria for defining such success are simply the ability to get noticed or to successfully obstruct performances of Israeli musicians and the like. Nowhere have they shown how their actions bring benefits to Palestinians, in any shape or form.

BDS seeks to present itself as representing a grass-roots groundswell of opinion, when in actual fact its ability to insinuate itself onto the agenda of civic institutions (as has happened in some unions) derives largely from the active exploitation of procedural mechanisms on the part of relatively few activists, usually driven by a deep animus towards the State of Israel and its people. The views and priorities of the majority of those organizations' members are never canvassed, nor their support secured.

Nevertheless, BDS presents a threat to Israeli interests, to Jewish communities and to all those who wish to see a strong, vibrant Israel living side-by-side in peace with its neighbours. BDS campaigning has a corrosive effect on exposed populations, and, to some extent, on the parameters of public discourse surrounding Israel, even when concrete BDS initiatives are rejected. BDS also offers an organizing focus and engine for anti-Israel activity, allowing campaigners to harness often naïve and unwitting support for their agenda. By wrapping itself in the imagery and language of civil and human rights, of non-violent resistance and anti-colonialism, BDS is tapping well-established strains of political thought and activism and channeling them uniquely in the service of a clearly anti-Israel agenda, driven by fundamental hostility to Israel's very existence.

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